Arab World English Journal
INTERNATIONAL PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL ISSN: 2229-9327

Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 16. Number 4, December 2025 Pp. 124-147
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol16no4.7

On the Integration of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture into Public English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges in China

Xia Peng
Jiangxi College of Foreign Studies, Nanchang City, China
Corresponding Author: 754736339@qq.com

Xinjian Hu
Foreign Languages College, Jiangxi Normal University, Nanchang City, China
Email: huxinjian168@sina.com

Caiyun Cheng
The Yaohu Campus of the Affiliated Middle School of Jiangxi Normal University
Email: 2466788255@qq.com

Zhengjun Yang
Foreign Languages College, Jiangxi Normal University, Nanchang City, China
Email: 939353194@qq.com

Received: 08/13/2025 Accepted:10/17/2025 Published:12/10/2025

Abstract
This research adopts a mixed-methods approach (structured questionnaire survey of public English teachers from some key vocational colleges in Jiangxi province in China, semi-structured interviews with public English department directors, literature review, and inductive analysis) to explore effective pathways for integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into public English teaching in higher vocational colleges and address implementation dilemmas. It finds out that the integration is essential for fostering students' cultural confidence, safeguarding national cultural identity, and meeting the talent development objectives outlined in *the English Curriculum Standards for Higher Vocational Education (2021 Edition)*. However, current challenges include limited awareness and competence among public English teachers regarding cultural education, fragmented and superficial inclusion of traditional cultural elements in teaching materials, and teaching practices that are often formalistic and ineffective. To address these issues, it is crucial to promote collaboration among governments, colleges , teaching staff to explore cultural resources and develop diversified teaching materials, strengthen teacher training to improve their capacity for cultural integration, and innovate classroom instruction through the expansion of extracurricular and "cloud classroom" learning platforms. Given their effectiveness, these measures are recommended to enhance cultural integration efficacy and ultimately achieve the talent cultivation goals outlined in the *New Curriculum Standards*.

Keywords: Cultural education, excellent traditional Chinese culture, higher vocational colleges, public English teaching
How to cite: Peng, X., Hu, X., Cheng, C., & Yang, Z. (2025). On the Integration of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture into Public English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges in China. *Arab World English Journal, 16*(4):124-147. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol16no4.7

Introduction

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, pointed out (2024,p.11): "The best of China's traditional culture is the lifeblood of the Chinese nation. It provides fertile soil for the core socialist values and the foundation for the nation to gain a firm foothold in global cultural interaction. Strengthening cultural consciousness and confidence is integral to strengthening confidence in the path, theory, and system of Chinese socialism." This statement profoundly clarifies the strategic significance of inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture (hereinafter referred to as ETCC) for national development and cultural identity.

As a core public foundation course in higher vocational education, public English teaching directly influences the construction of cultural identity among vocational students through the integration of ETCC in its pedagogical practices. However, traditional public English teaching has long been dominated by an overemphasis on instrumental functions, demonstrating a tendency to prioritize instrumental value over humanistic cultivation, which significantly weakens the effectiveness of fostering holistic development through cultural education in such courses.

Against this backdrop, the *English Curriculum Standards for Higher Vocational Education (2021 Edition;* hereinafter referred to as the *New Curriculum Standards*) explicitly identifies "cultural literacy" as a core educational objective, requiring the integration of ETCC into English teaching. To respond to this requirement and address the instrumentalization dilemma, this study aims to construct a "trinity teaching model" that integrates English instruction, cultural inheritance, and value cultivation. By systematically exploring the selection of ETCC content, innovation of teaching methods, and optimization of evaluation mechanisms, this study intends to supplement the theoretical framework of ideological and political education in vocational public English courses, and provide practical pathways for cultivating high-quality technical talents with both ETCC grounding and global perspectives.

Research Purpose:

Aligned with ETCC inheritance strategies and the *New Curriculum Standards*, this study tackles vocational public English teaching's overemphasis on instrumentality over humanism, develops the "English instruction-cultural inheritance-value cultivation" trinity model, and offers pathways to nurture technical talents with Chinese cultural roots and global perspectives.

Research Questions:

What effective content selection, teaching method innovation, and evaluation mechanisms apply to the integration of ETCC into vocational college public English teaching?

How can the trinity model resolve the "instrumentalization" dilemma and boost the cultural educational effectiveness of public English courses?

Literature review

In recent years, Chinese scholars have conducted in-depth research on the *Three Teachings Reform* (covering teachers, teaching materials, and teaching methods) in higher vocational colleges. As of now, more than 600 articles indexed by CNKI, including over 40 articles from the *Peking University Core Journals List*. These research findings have reached a considerable level of depth. For example, Zhou & Chen (2019) and Liang & Zhang (2022) conducted comprehensive analyses of the background, core connotations, and practical pathways of the *Three Teachings Reform.* Wu & Zhang (2021) and Gong (2021) focused on practical challenges in the reform

process, such as the adaptability of teachers' competencies and textbook content, and proposed targeted solutions. Huang & Yao (2023)explored the new requirements and implementation paths of the *Three Teachings Reform* in higher vocational education.

However, research specifically addressing the integration of ETCC into public English teaching under the *Three Teachings Reform* in higher vocational colleges remains relatively limited: only more than 50 articles indexed by CNKI, and none of them are from core journals. Existing studies in this area primarily concentrate on two aspects: teaching practices and the integration of ideological and political education. For instance, Yu (2022) and Xu (2022) analyzed the implementation pathways of ideological and political education in public English courses within the context of the *Three Teachings Reform*. Ge (2020) identified key problems in current higher vocational English teaching. Liu (2025) systematically examined the significance, feasibility, and specific strategies for integrating traditional culture. Y. Zhang (2024) and C. Zhang (2025) conducted in-depth studies on the challenges and countermeasures of implementing the *Three Teachings Reform* in public English courses of higher vocational colleges under the context of industry-education integration.

Research by overseas scholars primarily centered on cultural issues in second language teaching. For example, Miller (1972) argued that many cultural challenges in second language instruction stemmed from conceptual misunderstandings, and that teachers should possess a background in philosophical analysis to enhance language courses. Osmancık (2021) investigated teachers' perceptions of culture and its integration in English as a foreign language classrooms. Chao (1991) studied how students from different Chinese normal universities acquired social and cultural knowledge about the United States through foreign language instruction. Yu (2018) explored the teaching and learning of culture in Chinese high school English classrooms. Lee (2024) pointed out that the imbalance between the emphasis on local culture and the cultures of the *United States* and the *United Kingdom* in English textbooks hinders the effective development of cross-cultural communication skills. However, no relevant foreign literature was found regarding the integration of ETCC into public English teaching in vocational colleges.

In summary, existing research has three primary deficiencies. First, foreign studies primarily emphasize the transmission of Western culture in second language teaching, with limited discussion on the integration of local cultures. Second, domestic research lacks systematic strategies for integrating traditional culture within the framework of the *Three Teachings Reform*. Third, scholars have given insufficient attention to external influencing factors, such as the roles of the government and enterprises.

Methodology

The researchers conducted a structured questionnaire survey (administered via "Sojump") and semi-structured interviews to collect data for this study. A total of 131 public English teachers from over 20 provincial-level key vocational colleges in Jiangxi province completed the questionnaires. In the meanwhile, the researchers conducted telephone interviews with public English department directors from 10 of these colleges, aiming to examine the current status of integrating ETCC into public English teaching practices at these local institutions.

The researchers conducted a comprehensive literature review to establish a theoretical foundation, which included scholarly works focusing on the integration of ETCC and the *Three Teachings Reform* in the context of vocational English education.

Inductive analysis was applied to the collected data to identify core challenges across the dimensions of "teachers, textbooks, and teaching methods." This analytical approach ensured that the proposed countermeasures were grounded, rigorous, and feasible.

Results

This study identifies three key dilemmas—related to teachers, textbooks, and teaching—that constrain the integration of ETCC into public English teaching in higher vocational colleges:

First, public English teachers demonstrate insufficient awareness of "cultural education," limited ETCC literacy, and inadequate competence in delivering cultural content. Survey results indicate that nearly 30% of teachers continue to prioritize language skill development; 57.25% have not received systematic training in ETCC literacy, and over 47% report insufficient knowledge or teaching ability in this domain.

Second, the textbook dimension is hindered by delayed compilation processes (with few textbooks specifically designed for higher vocational undergraduate programs), fragmented ETCC content, and low levels of digitalization.

Third, the teaching dimension exhibits three key issues: an underdeveloped instructional environment, ineffective pedagogical activities, and unsatisfactory outcomes. Students' limited English proficiency, combined with reduced class hours, imposes dual constraints on effective teaching. Moreover, 48.85% of surveyed teachers rate students' ability to express ETCC in English as average. Additionally, perfunctory second classroom activities and superficial engagement in online learning—referred to as "fake online learning"—result in a disconnection between cultural learning and its practical application.

The Necessity of the Integration

Language is not only a fundamental component of culture but also a vital medium for its transmission and development. Within the context of traditional Chinese culture, the notion that literature conveys moral principles reflects the unity of language's instrumental and intrinsic values, which aligns with the contemporary English education philosophy of holistic education. Integrating ETCC into public English teaching in higher vocational colleges is an essential requirement for fostering students' cultural literacy and their ability to inherit traditional heritage, reinforcing the subjectivity of Chinese culture, and aligning with the developmental needs of cultural inheritance in the new era. It also represents a necessary step toward achieving the talent cultivation goals outlined in the *New Curriculum Standards* for higher vocational public English.

An Essential Component of Cultural Identity Maintenance

"Language constitutes the concrete content and vivid expression of foreign language education, while culture represents its ultimate objective and intrinsic essence." (Zhang, 2017,p.7). Currently, English has become a global lingua franca and dominates foreign language education in China. Western languages and cultures have exerted a profound influence on Chinese English teachers and students, presenting a significant challenge to the inheritance and preservation of Chinese linguistic and cultural traditions. Cultural awareness within English curriculum instruction remains underdeveloped, and there exists a noticeable imbalance between Chinese and Western cultural representations. The *New Curriculum Standards* clearly state: "English courses in higher vocational education are an integral part of the curriculum system at vocational colleges and serve as compulsory or limited elective public basic courses for students across all majors,

embodying both instrumental and humanistic attributes." (MOE PRC Doc., 2021,p.1). This policy emphasizes that public English teaching in higher vocational education must incorporate cultural identity considerations and maintain a balanced representation of Chinese and Western cultures within language skill development. On the one hand, integrating ETCC into teaching helps students acquire the ability to "tell Chinese stories in English"; On the other hand, through the design of teaching materials and classroom activities, teachers should emphasize a comparative cultural perspective to guide students in critically understanding cultural differences and building a defense line for cultural identity.

The Intrinsic Requirement for Enhancing Cultural Confidence

Xi (2013) has pointed out successively that cultural confidence is "a more fundamental, pervasive, and enduring source of confidence" and that "a nation without spiritual strength cannot stand firm among the nations of the world." "Excellent traditional Chinese culture represents the wisdom and essence of Chinese civilization. It is the root and soul of the Chinese nation and serves as the foundation upon which we steadfastly uphold ourselves amidst the tides of global cultures." *The Recommendations for Implementing the Initiative on Inheriting and Developing China's Fine Traditional Culture* explicitly stipulates that "Educational institutions and educators should fully integrate excellent traditional Chinese culture into all aspects of ideological and moral education, cultural knowledge education, art and physical education, and social practice education, and permeate it through all stages of early childhood education, basic education, vocational education, higher education, and continuing education." (CPC & State Council Doc., 2017,p.7) .

The discussions and policy provisions require higher vocational public English courses to actively participate in cultural inheritance and innovation by incorporating ETCC into English teaching and cultivating students' cultural consciousness. By comparing cultural differences between China and the West (such as collectivism versus individualism, and harmony versus competition), teachers can guide students to understand the unique value of Chinese culture deeply. Through the English interpretation of traditional Chinese concepts such as "harmony between man and nature" and "harmony without uniformity," students' ability to articulate Chinese wisdom in English can be enhanced. This process of cultural comparison and bidirectional interpretation enables students to rediscover the contemporary relevance of Chinese culture within the context of globalization, and thereby strengthen their sense of Chinese cultural identity and national pride.

Measures to Achieve the Talent Cultivation Objectives

The *New Curriculum Standards* explicitly state that teachers should integrate the improvement of students' four core competencies--cross-professional communication in the workplace, multicultural exchange, language thinking enhancement, and autonomous learning improvemen--throughout the entire teaching process (MOE PRC Doc., 2021). This core competency requirement represents a specific and comprehensive demand for higher vocational English courses in the new era, reflecting the organic integration of professional knowledge transmission, work capability cultivation, and values-oriented education.

In the context of the deepening implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative and China's increasing role on the global stage, international economic cooperation and cultural exchange activities occur with growing frequency. Consequently, society has an escalating expectation for high-quality technical and skilled talents who are not only proficient in professional foreign language skills but also possess a deep understanding of the essence of Chinese culture.

To achieve this new goal of talent development, it is essential to deeply integrate ETCC into higher vocational public English teaching. In teaching practice, teachers should employ innovative teaching methods to guide students in completing tasks centered on language application and cultural dissemination, thereby promoting the coordinated development of language proficiency and cultural literacy. Only when students are capable of expressing themselves fluently in English and accurately conveying Chinese values can the curriculum goal of "cultivating technical and skilled talents with Chinese sentiments and international vision," as outlined in the *New Curriculum Standards*, be genuinely realized. These students can then become active and effective disseminators of Chinese culture in future international exchanges.

The Challenges of the Integration

In 2000, Professor Cong of Nanjing University pointed out that "there remains in English teaching in our country a significant issue –the aphasia phenomenon of Chinese culture." (Cong, 2000). In recent years, this issue has drawn extensive attention from the academic community. However, it remains unresolved within the context of higher vocational education. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the current situation, the authors conducted a survey across more than 20 representative higher vocational colleges, including those in the G10 Alliance in Jiangxi province, in July 2024, collecting a total of 131 valid questionnaires and conducting 10 in-depth interviews.

The results reveal that public English teachers in higher vocational colleges have exhibited a heightened awareness of "cultural education." Consequently, the aphasia phenomenon of Chinese culture in public English teaching has gradually improved. Nevertheless, an imbalance persists in the representation of Chinese and Western cultures. ETCC remains underrepresented in public English teaching, and its integration faces multidimensional challenges related to "teachers, teaching materials, and teaching methods."

Teachers Exhibit Limited Awareness, Knowledge Reserve, and Weak Ability

According to the survey data, 96.95% of the respondents agreed that educators should cultivate students' awareness of promoting ETCC during English instruction, and 54.96% agreed that "the classroom is the main arena for moral education, and we should place emphasis on enhancing students' English language application ability and cross-cultural communication competence." These findings suggest that the Concept–"English teaching is not merely language instruction but also talent cultivation through culture"–has gained a certain level of consensus among public English teachers.

However, some teachers still adhere to the pedagogical philosophy of "application as the goal," perceiving English primarily as a means of communication. They place excessive emphasis on the instrumental function of language while neglecting its cultural dimensions. The survey also revealed that nearly 30% of the respondents believed that public English teaching should focus on developing students' English language skills, 14.5% emphasized helping students absorb the essence of English culture and develop new ways of thinking, and 34.35% admitted to having insufficient awareness of communication. Under such cognitive biases, classroom teaching practice prioritizes language skill training and knowledge transmission, while the educational orientation of the English curriculum remains underemphasized (Wen & Zhang, 2021).

Most public English teachers in higher vocational colleges, who graduated from English majors, have internalized the phenomenon of "Chinese cultural aphasia." The Concept of "cultural education" is notably absent from their professional development, resulting in an inherent

deficiency in cultural literacy. In the prior English major curriculum, courses related to Chinese culture accounted for a low proportion—which were insufficient to meet teachers' needs for in-depth study of traditional cultural knowledge. The current survey reveals that 57.25% of respondents acknowledged inadequate instruction in core traditional Chinese cultural literacy during their undergraduate studies. After entering the workforce, public English teachers have minimal access to opportunities for improving their cultural literacy, and there is a severe lack of continuing education in this area. None of the teachers surveyed had participated in any state-level training programs related to cultivating talents through culture in the past five years; only two had attended provincial-level training sessions, and just 46.31% had participated in school-based or online training. The scarcity of such training resources makes it difficult for teachers to update their cultural knowledge or master effective cultural teaching methods. From the perspective of teachers' self-assessment, they also exhibit a significant lack of confidence in this aspect. Specifically, 63.36% of the surveyed teachers reported having received insufficient education in ETCC, and 42.75% rated their own literacy in this area as merely average. This situation not only constrains teachers' ability to instruct in the classroom, but also directly impacts the effectiveness of students' cultural literacy development.

Although 64.89% of the surveyed teachers reported that the content of Chinese and English culture was approximately equivalent in public English teaching, and 96.95% indicated that they assigned out-of-class activities—such as watching movies, listening to the radio, and viewing English videos —to help students learn ETCC, many teachers still prioritize improving students' English language application skills and boosting their pass rates on English proficiency tests, often at the expense of cultivating students' humanistic qualities (Wang & Tang, 2019).

In terms of teaching methods, most public English teachers continue to rely on the traditional "translation+explanation" model, which lacks innovation, resulting in a weak ability to cultivate students through culture. Such weak cultural cultivation capacity makes it difficult to effectively stimulate students' interest in learning traditional Chinese culture. According to 47.33% and 48.85% of the surveyed teachers, the primary reasons for the challenges in teaching ETCC in English classes are the insufficient knowledge reserve and the weak teaching ability of teachers in delivering ETCC. These shortcomings hinder teachers from flexibly applying diverse teaching methods and achieving the deep integration of language instruction and cultural education.

Textbooks Exhibit Deficiency in Integration, Content Incorporation, and Digitalization

Currently, due to the absence of a multiparty collaborative textbook development system involving education authorities, universities, industry enterprises, and cultural institutions, there is a lack of specialized policy guidance and financial support—and these parties have yet to establish an effective collaborative mechanism for textbook compilation. Compared with other disciplines, the development of public English textbooks for higher vocational education lags considerably behind. In 2023, the Ministry of Education announced the first batch of 7,251 national planning textbooks for vocational education during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (hereinafter referred to as the "14th Five-Year Plan"). Among these, only 45 were public English textbooks for higher vocational education, accounting for just 0.62% of the total selected, with only 24 being newly submitted titles.

In terms of the composition of public English textbook compilation teams, over 75% of the members are English language experts. At the same time, the participation of scholars in ETCC and vocational education remains significantly inadequate. This imbalance has led to limitations in the selection of cultural content and the representation of vocational characteristics in textbooks,

making it challenging to meet the evolving demands of public English teaching in higher vocational colleges.

The development of localized English textbooks also remains underdeveloped. The survey found that only a few provinces, such as Jiangxi, Shandong, and Guangdong, have developed English textbooks incorporating local cultural elements. However, these localized textbooks generally face issues such as limited quantity, low quality, and minimal usage.

Moreover, the development of public English textbooks specifically designed for higher vocational undergraduate programs is severely lacking. Among the national planning textbooks selected under the 14th Five-Year Plan, only one series–*"New Century College Applied English – Integrated Course1-3*," edited by Fu Yu from Shanghai International Studies University and published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press–was included. Currently, many higher vocational undergraduate colleges still directly adopt college English textbooks designed for regular undergraduate institutions. These textbooks fail to fully address the career development needs and learning characteristics of higher vocational undergraduate students and lack targeted integration of ETCC. Consequently, they are unable to effectively support the achievement of public English teaching objectives in higher vocational undergraduate education.

Although the national standard for public English textbooks in higher vocational education under the "14th Five-Year Plan" places greater emphasis on ideological and political education than previous editions and incorporates new content—such as fostering students' ability to tell Chinese stories and promote Chinese culture in English—there remain notable shortcomings in practical application. According to survey data, 49.62 percent of the teachers believe that the current textbooks provide insufficient coverage of ETCC. Furthermore, researchers widely view the integration of cultural knowledge as inadequate, superficial, and unsystematics, which limits its cultural influence on students. As a result, the incorporation of traditional culture in existing textbooks exhibits a "fragmented" feature. Take the *Fifth Edition* of the "14th Five-Year Plan" national standard textbook, *New Practical English Comprehensive Course 2* (Rev. ed.), as an example. Although the "Section V: Appreciating Chinese Culture" in each unit is specifically dedicated to presenting the English expression of ETCC, over 70% of this content is presented solely as after-class exercises. This fragmented arrangement undermines the coherence and integrity of cultural instruction, making it difficult to guide students in conducting an in-depth exploration of traditional cultural connotations. In terms of content distribution, there exists a problem of "singleness" in the integration of ETCC within current textbooks.

Currently, elements of ETCC predominantly concentrate in poetry, with insufficient representation of national characteristics and deeper cultural dimensions such as history and philosophy (Shao, 2024). For instance, in the *Fifth Edition* of *New Practical English Comprehensive Course 2* (Rev. ed.), content related to poetry translation accounts for over 50% of ETCC elements, and content focusing on food or festivals makes up nearly 70% of such elements. In contrast, current textbooks minimally incorporate institutional culture, spiritual culture, and revolutionary culture. The content structure fails to fully demonstrate the richness and diversity of ETCC, thereby hindering the cultivation of students' comprehensive understanding and deep appreciation of Chinese culture, as well as failing to meet the diversified cultural literacy requirements for technical and skilled talents in the new era.

Digital college English textbooks refer to a teaching system that is based on advanced information infrastructure and deeply integrates digital technologies—such as cloud computing, the Internet, and big data—with college English content. These systems serve teachers, students,

textbook developers, and researchers through interactive and personalized teaching platforms that provide extensive resources and comprehensive digital courses (Bao & Li, 2017). However, the development of digital textbooks for higher vocational English significantly lags behind current educational demands. Among the national standard textbooks for higher vocational public English during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, only two titles-*"Practical English 1, 2 Digital Course"* and *"New Practical English Digital Course 1, 2,"* published by Higher Education Electronic Audio-Visual Press Co., Ltd., were selected, accounting for a tiny proportion.

In terms of the format of existing digital textbooks, over 50% are remain static e-books (PDF, EPUB, etc.), which are essentially digitized replicas of printed textbooks that lack intelligent interactive functionalities. Such static digital formats only provide basic operational functions, such as text browsing and audio playback, and do not support meaningful interactive engagement between students and the textbook content. Consequently, they are unable to meet the growing demand for autonomous and personalized learning.

Moreover, most digital resources provided by mainstream teaching platforms (e.g., The Smart Education of China platform, Rain Classroom, and SuperStarLearn) remain at the "audio-visual" level, such as playing English listening materials and displaying cultural videos. These platforms lack pedagogically oriented advanced interactive functionalities, such as task-based immersive virtual simulation, and therefore remain unable to dynamically adjust teaching content in line with students' current proficiency levels in cultural comprehension.

In terms of resource content, data from the National Higher Vocational English Teaching Resource Library indicate that Western cultural resources account for two-thirds of the total, while digital English textbooks and supplementary materials related to local traditional culture and revolutionary culture are severely insufficient. Moreover, the update cycle for these resources is excessively long.

This lagging state of digital textbook development not only hinders the innovation of public English teaching models but also negatively impacts students' engagement with and dissemination of ETCC, making it challenging to meet the demands of education in the new era.

Teaching Exhibit Underdeveloped Environment, Superficial Participation, Low Effectiveness

Under the impetus of English teaching reform and the *New Curriculum Standards* higher vocational colleges have preliminarily established a "cultural education" framework. However, they face multiple constraints in policy implementation, which significantly hinder the deep integration of ETCC with public English teaching.These challenges primarily manifest themselves in two key dimensions: the structural imbalance within the sociocultural ecology, and the dual constraints arising from the learning context and class hours.

The current social cultural ecology is under dual pressures from historical cultural discontinuity and the utilitarian orientation of the market economy. Modernization and digitalization have impeded the intergenerational transmission of traditional culture, leading to a weakened sense of cultural identity among the younger generation, which in turn undermines the foundation for its continued inheritance. Although the *Annual Report on the Quality of Vocational Education in China (2023)* indicates that since 2022, vocational colleges have consistently implemented a series of initiatives, such as "Contributing to a strong country through skills and success"–including skill-based inheritance of ETCC, which could serve as crucial measures to address existing gaps and foster a supportive cultural atmosphere. However, survey data still reveal significant shortcomings: 13.74% of surveyed teachers perceive low social recognition, and 35.11% believe the policy environment remains imperfect. These issues directly limit students'

opportunities to engage with traditional culture through English expression. The frequency of such cultural encounters in daily and campus contexts has notably declined, making it difficult to cultivate an integrated learning environment that combines traditional culture with English, not to mention establishing a continuously immersive cultural atmosphere on campus.

Under the dominance of the "certificate + examination" evaluation system, public English teaching in higher vocational colleges continues to emphasize language proficiency, with CET-4 and CET-6 pass rates serving as the primary performance indicators. In contrast, educational practices generally overlook the integration of ETCC into English instruction. Many higher vocational colleges directly link English proficiency test scores to students' graduation eligibility and the evaluation of teaching staff. This assessment orientation compels teachers to prioritize exam-oriented instruction, thereby reducing the time and opportunities for designing and implementing content related to traditional culture. Consequently, students tend to focus on obtaining certificates rather than engaging with cultural content, fostering a prevailing mindset of "emphasizing exams over culture." This tendency further exacerbates the challenges associated with integrating traditional culture into English education.

Vocational college students' learning characteristics, such as a weak English ability and low motivation for self-study, when combined with the current reduction in public English class hours, form a dual constraint. The generally low English proficiency among higher vocational students directly hinders their ability to comprehend English expressions about traditional culture. According to research data, 69.13% of surveyed teachers identified students' poor English foundation as the primary barrier to integrating ETCC into English instruction. At the same time, many vocational colleges have generally cut public English class hours from four to two sessions per week. With this significant reduction in instructional time, teachers struggle to design and implement teaching activities systematically, while students lack sufficient opportunities to engage in the cultural activities deeply. These overlapping challenges make it difficult to achieve the goals of culture cultivation effectively and undermine the overall teaching outcomes significantly.

Although many public English teachers in higher vocational colleges have actively explored the integration of ETCC into English instruction, some problems, including rigid teaching methods, monotonous instructional formats, and a lack of substantive engagement between teachers and students in teaching activities, still deserve attention.

Many public English teachers continue to rely on traditional lecture-based approaches that emphasize rote knowledge transmission. The incorporation of ETCC often appears "occasional" and "fragmented," lacking a systematic design, which hinders students from fully and deeply grasping the core values of ETCC and impedes the realization of effective cultural education.

Many higher vocational colleges organize activities such as "English corners" with themes centered on ETCC, and also host English speech contests and ETCC-themed cultural performances during traditional festivals like the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. However, some of these activities demonstrate superficial engagement at the expense of cultural depth and pedagogical quality. Consequently, these activities often devolve into symbolic "performances" that fail to enhance students' cultural literacy or cross-cultural communication competence substantially. Although many higher vocational colleges have adopted the "online + offline" teaching model through platforms such as SuperStar Learn and Rain Classroom, these platforms are often underutilized. In practice, students primarily use them as tools for out-of-class self-study, with minimal supervision or guidance provided during the learning process. A widespread phenomenon of "Online course completion through automated methods" exists, where students

mechanically complete tasks such as watching videos, without genuinely engaging with the cultural content. Furthermore, relevant parties have not effectively integrated online teaching and classroom instruction, resulting in the problem of disconnection. For example, the learning tasks related to ETCC assigned on online platforms are rarely reviewed or discussed in classroom settings. This disconnection prevents students from consolidating and applying the knowledge they have acquired online, significantly undermining the effectiveness of the integration efforts.

Currently, the integration of ETCC into public English teaching in higher vocational colleges has not achieved the desired outcomes. Many vocational college students demonstrate only a superficial understanding of traditional culture, with limited comprehension of its more profound connotations and values. According to survey results, 48.85% of the teachers surveyed assessed students' ability to express ETCC in English as merely average, while 48% rated it as "poor" or "very poor." That means many students are still struggling to use English to introduce and explain ETCC.

This lack of teaching effectiveness directly hinders the achievement of core literacy goals outlined in the *New Curriculum Standards* such as "cross-professional communication in the workplace, multicultural exchange." As a result, it not only constrains students' career development potential but also fails to meet the demands for high-quality technical and skilled talents in the new era, highlighting the urgent need to enhance the integration of ETCC into public English teaching in higher vocational education.

Practical Approaches to the Integration

The integration of ETCC into public English teaching in higher vocational colleges is a systematic endeavor that requires coordinated efforts from multiple stakeholders, including the government, colleges and universities, teachers, and students. It should be advanced through comprehensive measures in textbook development, teacher training, pedagogical reform, and resource support, while fully leveraging students as central participants, teachers as facilitators, governments and schools as supervisors, textbooks as carriers, and teaching methods as mediators （Peng, X., Peng, C., & Zhang, B., 2024）. Only in this way can effective integration be realized.

Textbook Selection Path: Development and Selection of High-Quality Teaching Materials

English textbooks serve as crucial carriers of teaching content and form the foundation for effective English instruction in higher vocational education. According to the *New Curriculum Standards*, higher vocational English textbooks should reflect professional characteristics, integrate ETCC, and align with the language learning patterns of vocational students. (MOE PRC Doc., 2021). Therefore, the development and selection of high-quality textbooks is essential. Strict quality control over textbooks and the effective integration of ETCC into public English textbooks are key prerequisites for achieving the talent cultivation objectives. To ensure this, education authorities should invite experts and scholars in English education and traditional culture, along with representatives of teachers from higher vocational colleges, to jointly participate in English textbook reforms(Li, 2024).

Government departments and higher vocational colleges should actively mobilize diverse forces and adhere to the principles of classicism and readability to thoroughly examine the core ideas, traditional virtues, and life philosophies embedded in ETCC. For example, they should focus on classic cultural elements centered around fundamental concepts such as "benevolence, people-oriented governance, integrity, justice, harmony, and the pursuit of the Great Unity," as well as traditional virtues such as "self-improvement, dedication to one's profession and social

responsibility, helping those in need, acting bravely for justice, and respecting the elderly and cherishing family tie" (*Document of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council*, 2017). Furthermore, educators should pay attention to the ideological and moral education themes present in Chinese cultural classics, such as the Confucian emphasis on "the moral character of the noble person " and "the unity of family, nation, and the world", as well as the teachings in *The Great Learning* on "governing the state and bringing peace to the realm" and "the learning of the great person."(Yang & Li, 2021).

In the process of compiling specific teaching materials, it is essential to accurately identify the intersection between cultural content and language teaching by establishing sections dedicated to the comparison of Chinese and Western cultures. For instance, in the *Fifth Edition* of N*ew Practical English Comprehensive Course 2* (Rev. ed.), Section V, "Appreciating Chinese Culture," in each unit could be revised to "Comparison of Chinese and Western Excellent Traditional Cultures." Taking Unit 2 as an example, food culture in the section can serve as an entry point for comparing cultural differences.

Regional ethnic culture and revolutionary culture are essential components of ETCC, embodying its unique historical memory and spiritual connotations of Chinese civilization. Integrating these cultural elements into higher vocational public English textbooks can not only realize the localization of teaching content but also stimulate students' learning interest, thereby fulfilling the dual objectives of cultural inheritance and the development of cross-cultural communication competence. To fulfill this integration, education authorities and higher vocational colleges should establish a multiparty collaborative mechanism for cultural resource exploration, aligned with the talent cultivation goals that emphasize "workplace international communication and multicultural exchange." This mechanism should take into account both the characteristics of English language teaching and the demands of cultural exchange and inheritance.

From the perspective of language instruction, English experts should assess the linguistic and pedagogical appropriateness of cultural content. At the same time, regional traditional culture specialists should identify and summarize cultural symbols and core values.

For example, in the unit about "Travel" of the *Fifth Edition* of *New Practical English Comprehensive Course 2* (Rev. ed.), Jiangxi culture can be effectively integrated by exploring Jingdezhen's ceramic culture and the region’s revolutionary culture heritage. English audio, video, and image materials about the historical development of Jingdezhen ceramics can be incorporated into the textbook, guiding students to describe the artistic features of ceramic craftsmanship. Additionally, Curriculum designers should integrate English-language historical texts and images of the Nanchang Uprising into instructional materials. Moreover, with Jiangxi (the Long March's starting point) as a focal point, they can develop interactive modules to guide students in narrating the Long March story in English. Through systematic exploration and integration of local cultural elements, such efforts can significantly elevate the educational value of teaching resources, thereby fostering students’ cultural confidence and deepening their identification with regional cultural heritage.

To meet the requirements of high-quality development in vocational education and effectively enhance the quality of public English teaching in higher vocational colleges, it is imperative to accelerate the development and adoption of new forms of English textbooks. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2022) proposed precise requirements in its *Implementation Plan for the Construction of Planning Textbooks for Vocational Education* during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period, including advancing the development of textbook-related

resources and digital textbooks, exploring the digital transformation of printed textbooks, and developing more audio-visual, interactive, and practice-oriented digital textbooks. This policy highlights the nation's strong emphasis on the innovation of textbook formats and provides clear guidance for the reform of public English textbooks in higher vocational education.

Higher vocational colleges should fully leverage AIGC (Artificial Intelligence Generated Content) technology to expedite the development and enrichment of digital textbook resources, thereby constructing an English teaching system that integrates online self-study with offline, teacher-led instruction. For example, in Unit 3 "Travel" of the *Fifth Edition* of *New Practical English Comprehensive Course 2* (Rev. ed.), digital resources related to the grandeur of the Great Wall, the historical depth of the Imperial Palace, the exquisite craftsmanship of the Terracotta Warriors, and the travel narratives of Xu Xiake can be incorporated and presented through diverse digital formats such as videos, audio clips, texts, images, and virtual tours. Students can gain historical and cultural insights by watching high-definition documentaries, experience scenic spots through immersive virtual tours, and participate in interactive Q&A sessions and role-playing activities to deepen their comprehension and application of the content.

The application of these new digital teaching materials facilitates interactive and data-driven teaching models between teachers and students. Based on students' online learning data, teachers can monitor learning progress and provide timely, targeted offline guidance. The intelligent and personalized features of digital textbooks cater to the diverse learning needs of students, support teachers in implementing intelligent classroom management, enhance students' understanding of ETCC, and ultimately improve their cross-cultural communication competence.

Government departments and higher vocational colleges should collaborate in coordinating the selection and compilation of public English textbooks, ensuring that the content meets high academic standards and upholds the correct ideological orientation.

During the textbook compilation process, textbook compilers should maintain the principle of combining diversified development with unified standards. On the one hand, local regions should be encouraged to develop localized teaching materials that reflect regional characteristics, tailored to the demands of local industrial development and cultural resources, thereby expanding the sources of English teaching content. For example, higher vocational colleges in coastal cities can focus on international trade and port English, while those in regions rich in tourism resources can create materials that integrate local scenic culture with tour guide English.

On the other hand, relevant authorities should coordinate national resources and utilize the expertise of scholars in linguistics and education to develop high-quality national textbooks.

These textbooks should address the fundamental English learning needs of students across different regions and majors, and contribute to the standardization and enhancement of English teaching nationwide.

In teaching material selection, it is imperative to reject the practices of "borrowing without adaptation" and regional protectionism. The "uncritical adoption" approach often involves the use of unadapted foreign textbooks centered on Western culture, emphasizing foreign narratives while being seriously disconnected from Chinese society and values. This approach tends to cause misalignment in students' cultural identity. Regional protectionism, in contrast, results in the circulation of uneven-quality local materials into classrooms, undermining teaching quality.

Therefore, relevant authorities must strictly enforce the principle of "reviewing all selected materials" and establish a scientific and rigorous textbook review mechanism. These two measures will strengthen the significance of textbook selection, ensuring content accuracy, structural

coherence, and appropriate difficulty levels. Only in this way can high-quality teaching materials be guaranteed to enter higher vocational public English classrooms, thereby supporting students in improving both their English proficiency and cultural confidence.

Teacher Training Pathways: Enhance Teachers' Awareness and Competence through Multifaceted Approaches

In higher vocational public English teaching, public English teachers serve as the leaders of classroom instruction and the core force in achieving educational objectives. Their awareness and competence in "cultural education" are therefore of critical importance. Public English teachers with a strong foundation in ETCC not only contribute to their own professional growth and career development, but also promote the overall quality of education, acting as key agents in the dissemination and inheritance of ETCC. These dual contributions directly influence the formation of students' cultural identity and the effective transmission of traditional cultural values. (Cao, 2019). Therefore, higher vocational colleges must innovate training formats and implement multidimensional and systematic approaches to comprehensively enhance public English teachers' cultural literacy and strengthen their capacity.

Enhancing teachers' cultural literacy is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving the goal of "cultural education." Education authorities should fulfill their administrative responsibilities by formulating policy guidelines and industry standards, coordinating training resources, and establishing communication platforms. Colleges and universities should take primary responsibility by designing structured training programs that align with their institutional development and faculty planning. Teacher training design should prioritize developing teachers' cultural literacy and refining their pedagogical skills, covering both the traditional cultural knowledge system and effective strategies for integrating cultural elements into classroom instruction.

Training designers should develop innovative "Internet +" training models for the information age. They can build online platforms, integrate premium educational resources (exemplary courses, expert lectures, cultural materials) to enable teachers' flexible, anytime, anywhere self-directed learning, and leverage online tools for real-time discussion and Q&A sessions. They should also organize regular offline sessions (training, workshops, seminars) and invite cultural and educational experts for on-site guidance. Such systematic training can continuously enhance public English teachers' cultural literacy and inheritance capacity.

Experienced senior teachers and experts in traditional culture represent invaluable resources for the development of the public English teaching staff in higher vocational colleges. In contrast, young teachers often lack sufficient traditional cultural literacy and practical teaching experience. By fully leveraging the guiding and mentoring role of veteran teachers and experts, higher vocational colleges can significantly shorten the professional growth cycle of young teachers, enabling them to adapt more quickly to the demands of teaching positions.

Colleges and universities should maximize the organizational and coordinating role of the Public English Teaching and Research Section by actively implementing a mentorship model that integrates "senior teachers + traditional culture experts + young teachers." This approach fosters the formation of collaborative learning teams and promotes complementary strengths and coordinated development among different teacher groups. Within this collaborative framework, experienced senior teachers can guide young teachers in classroom management, instructional design, and the application of effective teaching strategies. Meanwhile, traditional culture experts,

with their deep academic knowledge, can assist young teachers in strengthening their understanding of ETCC and support the organic integration of cultural elements into English teaching content. This collaborative model also contributes to the cultivation of a positive learning environment and an effective mechanism for cultural transmission, thereby facilitating the rapid professional growth and comprehensive development of young teachers.

Collaborative lesson planning serves as an effective strategy for integrating teaching resources and promoting teacher development. By drawing upon successful models of collective and cloud-based lesson planning from ideological and political courses, and by fully utilizing both internal and external school resources, higher vocational colleges can overcome institutional barriers, facilitate the sharing of teaching experience and pedagogical insights, and better support higher vocational public English teachers in integrating ETCC into their instruction.

Given challenges in higher vocational public English teaching, including fragmented resources and uneven teacher development, education authorities or industry associations should coordinate by regularly organizing cross-institutional, cross-regional collaborative lesson planning for public English teachers. This coordination and organization will help build professional development platforms transcending geographical and institutional boundaries. Mechanism implementation requires integrating diverse educational resources: leading vocational colleges' public English teachers' practical teaching strengths, key universities' public English teachers' academic research capabilities, and ETCC education experts. This multi-layered, diversified resource system covers teaching practice, academic research, and cultural education.

In terms of specific implementation, we can adopt an innovative approach that combines "in-school + out-of-school" collaboration with "offline + online" integration. Within the school, the Public English Teaching and Research Section serves as the foundational unit, where teachers hold regular collaborative lesson planning sessions to conduct in-depth discussions on curriculum reconstruction, pedagogical innovation, and the integration of cultural elements. Externally, teaching teams can make use of online Cloud-based lesson planning platforms (e.g., Smart Education of China) to overcome geographical limitations, enable the sharing of high-quality teaching resources, and promote the exchange of diverse perspectives. Teachers can upload and share materials related to ETCC, engage in collaborative discussions on teaching strategies, and invite experts for remote guidance. Offline sessions, on the other hand, focus on practical application, promoting the deep integration of theory and practice through simulated teaching, classroom observation, and peer review.

Through multi-agent collaboration and multidimensional support, we can ultimately establish a multilevel and diversified lesson planning resource system that comprehensively covers teaching practice, academic research, and cultural education. This system will systematically enhance public English teachers’ awareness of cultural inheritance and their instructional capabilities, promoting the transformation of teachers from a single "professional" or "technical" role to a more holistic "teaching-research-cultivation" role. It will provide strong support for cultivating high-quality technical and skilled talents who possess both language proficiency and cultural confidence.

Teaching Innovation Pathways: Multidimensional Organization and Innovative Classroom Instructional Formats

Teaching activities serve as a vital medium for achieving educational objectives. In an era marked by continuously evolving pedagogical concepts and rapidly advancing technological tools,

innovating classroom instructional formats and enriching students' learning experiences have become critical to improving the quality of public English teaching in higher vocational colleges. Traditional teaching models are no longer adequate to meet students' diverse needs or effectively integrate traditional culture into instruction. Therefore, it is imperative to explore multidimensional pathways for teaching innovation, fully utilizing the classroom as the "main arena," expanding the educational role of the second classroom, and establishing "cloud classrooms" through new media platforms. This integrated approach will facilitate the organic integration of cultural inheritance and the development of language proficiency.

As the core component of public English instruction in higher vocational colleges, classroom teaching plays a central role in the effective integration of ETCC. Innovating teaching methods and optimizing teaching content are crucial to achieving this integration. Through the adoption of innovative approaches, teachers can not only effectively stimulate students' learning interests but also significantly enhance the overall pedagogical effectiveness of classroom instruction.

At the level of teaching method innovation, teachers should transcend the constraints of the traditional lecture-based model and integrate diversified strategies such as task-driven learning, situational teaching, and collaborative group work. Task-driven learning centers on traditional cultural themes, guiding students to enhance their language proficiency through practical assignments—such as creating promotional brochures for traditional Chinese festivals. Situational teaching establishes realistic contexts, such as international cultural exchange exhibitions, where students can practice presenting intangible cultural heritage in English, thereby strengthening their cross-cultural communication competence. Group collaboration engages students in debates on traditional cultural topics, promoting critical thinking while reinforcing teamwork abilities.

In terms of content optimization, the focus lies on integrating elements of ETCC into the English language curriculum. In vocabulary instruction, culture-loaded words such as "Yin-Yang," "Tai Chi," and "Calligraphy" can be explained in terms of their cultural meanings and historical origins. During grammar instruction, teachers can enhance students' understanding of grammatical rules by comparing how Chinese and Western languages convey traditional cultural concepts. Furthermore, teachers can design thematic classroom activities (such as "Telling Chinese Stories Well" and "Translating Chinese Culture") to enable students to experience cultural differences through language practice and engagement. These activities promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture, thereby fostering cultural confidence and reinforcing national identity (Chen, 2021).

The second classroom serves as a distinctive and complementary platform for deepening cultural education and improving cross-cultural communication competence within the context of public English teaching in higher vocational colleges. Through the innovation of activity formats and the integration of diverse resources, teachers can effectively establish an immersive and multidimensional environment for traditional culture learning.

In terms of activity innovation, colleges and universities can organize a diverse range of second classroom activities, such as lectures on ETCC, the establishment of cultural theme clubs, and the initiation of "Campus English Corners."—all designed to foster students' confidence in publicly communicating culture in English（Abdullah, A.T.H., Netra, I.M., & Hassan, I.H., 2024）. Furthermore, special events like "Festival Poetry English Reading Sessions" and "Traditional Food English Cooking Workshops" can be conducted in alignment with traditional Chinese festivals. To further enhance student engagement, schools can also host competitions such as the

"Chinese Traditional Culture English Microfilm Creation Contest" and "Traditional Handicrafts English Workshop" (Ding, 2021).

Resource integration is a crucial factor in optimizing the second classroom. Colleges and universities should enhance collaboration with external cultural institutions and enterprises to access high-quality educational resources. Partnerships with museums, art galleries, and other cultural venues can enable English-guided tours, allowing students to engage with the richness of traditional culture in authentic environments. In cooperation with foreign-related enterprises, "Cultural Exchange Internship Programs" can be implemented, providing students with practical platforms to promote Chinese culture in English. Furthermore, vocational colleges should integrate internal educational resources to facilitate the development of interdisciplinary courses. For instance, integrating English studies with art design can give rise to courses such as "Visual Representation of Traditional Culture and English Expression," thereby promoting interdisciplinary collaboration.

In the current era of digital transformation, reshaping education, new media technology provides unprecedented opportunities for innovation in teaching and learning.

Teachers can fully utilize the functional advantages of various new media platforms. Professional online education platforms such as SuperStarLearn are highly effective for constructing a structured curriculum framework. Teachers can upload courseware and video materials that integrate traditional cultural content, monitor students' learning progress through built-in tracking tools, and facilitate topic-based discussions via integrated forums. Video-sharing platforms like Bilibili, with their substantial reach and creative user ecosystem, are well-suited for producing short educational videos such as "One Minute to Understand the English Expression of Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage." These can stimulate students' interest in learning and encourage them to independently create English content centered on cultural themes, thereby fostering an interactive learning environment.

In actual teaching practice, it is crucial to emphasize the coordination between online and offline instruction. Offline classes should concentrate on delivering core knowledge and facilitating in-depth interaction, guiding students in exploring the integration of traditional culture with English expression. Meanwhile, the online "cloud classroom" functions as an essential platform for previewing, reviewing, and extending learning. Students can access pre-class materials to acquire background knowledge of traditional culture and utilize the platform for post-class reinforcement and extended learning activities, thereby maximizing overall teaching effectiveness.

Conditional Assurance Path: Optimize the Teaching Support Mechanism

Enhancing teaching conditions and institutional frameworks is an essential prerequisite for promoting the deep integration of public English teaching in higher vocational colleges with ETCC. Under the dual pressures of reduced class hours and the new moral education requirements introduced by the *New Curriculum Standards* establishing a systematic teaching guarantee mechanism holds significant practical value for achieving the goal of "cultural education." This mechanism should be advanced in a coordinated manner across three dimensions: strengthening ideological identity, improving teaching conditions, and optimizing the assessment system. By clarifying the core responsibilities of governments, colleges and universities, as well as teachers and students, a comprehensive teaching guarantee system can be effectively constructed.

Teachers' understanding and acceptance of the Concept of cultural education directly influence the depth and effectiveness of its implementation in teaching practice. Transforming ideological cognition serves as the foundational starting point for the integration. Therefore, educational administrators should prioritize ideological guidance for both teachers and students. Through activities like case sharing and academic discussions, they can strengthen value consensus on the role of "cultural education" and activate teachers' awareness of cultural inheritance and students' intrinsic learning motivation. Governments and colleges should, based on documents such as the *Opinions on Implementing the Project for the Inheritance and Development of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture* and the *New Curriculum Standards*, deepen policy interpretation and dissemination through multiple channels. Specifically, they can utilize special training sessions, policy interpretation meetings, and online learning platforms to systematically explain the role of cultural integration in enhancing cultural literacy. Such systematic explanation will guide society to fully recognize the importance of inheriting ETCC, which is crucial for improving the cultural literacy of the population, safeguarding national cultural identity, strengthening cultural soft power, and advancing the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity (CPC & State Council Doc., 2017). It will also enhance the sense of identity and consensus among teachers and students regarding the "cultural education" function of public English courses and inspire their ideological and behavioral commitment to learning and inheriting ETCC.

The quality of public English teaching directly influences the effectiveness of integrating ETCC into textbooks, classrooms, and school environments. Survey results indicate that 36.64% of the surveyed teachers identify limitations in school teaching plans as a significant obstacle to incorporating ETCC into English instruction. Currently, public English courses in higher vocational colleges face dual pressures: reduced class hours and the new moral education requirements. To address these challenges, higher vocational colleges should proactively optimize the teaching guarantee system in two core dimensions: class hour planning and resource construction.

In terms of class hour arrangement, higher vocational colleges should reconstruct the curriculum system based on the demand for "cultural education," appropriately increasing the total number of public English class hours. Additionally, higher vocational colleges should incorporate "second classroom" activities such as English culture salons and traditional culture-themed speech contests to advance the integration. Concerning teaching resource development, they should allocate increased funding to promote the intelligent and digital transformation of public English instruction. For instance, institutions can establish digital cultural resource libraries including videos, audio clips, and e-books that integrate English-language materials related to the teaching of ETCC. Furthermore, higher vocational colleges can introduce emerging technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality to create immersive cultural learning environments, thereby providing a solid material and technological foundation for the effective integration.

As a core component of educational evaluation, the assessment mechanism serves as a "guiding baton" in teaching practice, exerting a substantial influence on teaching direction, the allocation of educational resources, and the teaching and learning behaviors of both teachers and students.

Education authorities should establish a multidimensional evaluation system by incorporating the implementation process and outcomes of integrating ETCC into the assessment indicators. Educational supervision departments should enforce the primary responsibilities of colleges and

universities through regular inspections, targeted supervision, and other supervision mechanisms. At the institutional level, colleges and universities should develop a teacher evaluation mechanism integrating key cultural integration aspects (curriculum design innovation, accuracy of cultural explanations, educational effectiveness) into daily, annual, and tenure-based assessments, with clear, quantifiable scoring criteria.

About student assessment, it is necessary to reform evaluation content by appropriately increasing the proportion of knowledge related to ETCC and local culture in public English examinations and English proficiency tests. For instance, teachers can incorporate questions related to traditional culture in sections such as reading comprehension, translation, and writing. This approach encourages students to engage with traditional cultural knowledge actively, fully stimulates their enthusiasm and initiative in learning, and ultimately achieves the goal of promoting both teaching and learning through assessment (Jiang, 2022).

In the context of the deepening process of globalization and the deep-rooted concept of a community with a shared future for humanity, Chinese culture is becoming more and more welcomed in the world. As key institutions for cultivating high-level skilled talents that serve national strategies and local economic development, higher vocational colleges bear the significant responsibility of cultural inheritance and innovation. As a compulsory component of the higher vocational education system, public English courses effectively promote the development of four core competencies—cross-cultural communication for work, multicultural exchange, language thinking enhancement, and autonomous learning improvement—through the coordinated integration of teaching materials, instructional methods, and teacher guidance. Only in this way can the fundamental educational objective of "cultivating virtue and nurturing talent" in higher vocational public English courses be fully achieved.

Discussion

This study focuses on integrating ETCC into public English teaching in vocational colleges. Through an analysis of its necessity, identifying existing challenges, and proposing practical pathways, this research produces findings that hold both theoretical significance and practical value.

From the perspective of necessity, integrating ETCC into public English teaching in vocational colleges is an essential requirement for safeguarding cultural identity, strengthening cultural confidence, and fulfilling the training objectives outlined in the *New Curriculum Standards* for higher vocational public English. This direction aligns closely with the national strategy that emphasizes cultural confidence and promotes the inheritance and development of ETCC. However, in practice, a key challenge lies in balancing language instruction with cultural transmission within the skill-oriented framework of vocational education.

The identified practical challenges manifest as systematic obstacles across three dimensions. First, teachers often exhibit limited awareness of "cultural education" and inadequate cross-cultural teaching competence. These deficiencies stem from the lack of cultural education during pre-service training and inadequate in-service professional development. Second, textbook content is frequently outdated, featuring superficial integration of traditional culture and a lack of digital resources. Such deficiencies in content reflects an insufficient emphasis on integrating vocational characteristics with cultural depth in textbook design. Third, higher vocational colleges face teaching environment constraints from underdeveloped cultural activities and their limited effectiveness, both influenced by external factors including social-cultural ecology and assessment

mechanisms. Additionally, outdated teaching methods further impede progress. The interplay of these three factors constitutes structural barriers to the effective integration of traditional culture into public English teaching.

To address these challenges, this study proposes a collaborative mechanism involving "government, universities, teachers, and students" and a systematic promotion strategy focusing on "textbooks, teachers, and teaching methods." This integrated approach provides a multidimensional solution to the current predicament. Within the collaborative framework, the roles of "students as the main participants, teachers as the guides, and government and institutions as the supervisors" are clearly defined and effectively implemented. In terms of implementation, textbook development emphasizes a three-dimensional integration of "classic selections + local characteristics + vocational scenarios." Teacher training establishes a closed-loop system encompassing "pre-service education, in-service research, and enterprise practice." Meanwhile, teaching methods incorporate "virtual simulation technology" to create immersive cultural experience scenarios, thereby enhancing learner engagement and improving practical learning outcomes.

The successful implementation of these strategies requires addressing key issues such as effective coordination among stakeholders and the long-term sustainability of resources. Further in-depth exploration through case studies in vocational colleges is essential to refine and validate these approaches in future research.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the integration of ETCC into public English teaching in higher vocational colleges is not only an inevitable response to national strategies and the requirements of the *New Curriculum Standards* but also a crucial component in building a collaborative education system aligned with contemporary educational goals.

The existing challenges—such as teachers' limited cultural literacy, lagging textbook development, and diminished teaching effectiveness —originate from multiple sources: the absence of a cultural dimension in teacher training systems, the inadequate integration of vocational characteristics with cultural depth in textbook design, and the rigidity of evaluation systems and teaching methods.

To address these practical issues, this study proposes a "four-party collaboration" mechanism and a "three-dimensional advancement" pathway. Specifically, textbook development emphasizes the integration of "classics, local culture, and vocational scenarios"; teacher cultivation follows a "pre-service, in-service, and enterprise-based training" model; and teaching innovation focuses on "technology-enhanced instruction and scenario-based learning." Through these strategies, a tripartite framework of "English instruction, cultural transmission, and value cultivation" is established. This model effectively mitigates the prevalent overemphasis on technical skills at the expense of humanities in higher vocational English education, while facilitating the cultivation of technically competent talents equipped with both a strong Chinese cultural identity and a global perspective.

Higher vocational colleges are encouraged to advance educational reforms through strengthened multiparty collaboration and continuous optimization of teaching practices. Future research could focus on specific vocational contexts and investigate discipline-specific pathways for cultural integration. The insights gained from this study may also provide reference value for curriculum reform in other stages of education.

Funding: This study was supported by the 2023 Jiangxi Province Social Sciences "14th Five-Year Plan" Research Project (Grant No. 23YY11); the 2023 Jiangxi Province Social Sciences "14th Five-Year Plan" Research Project (Grant No. 23YY02); the 2024 Jiangxi Higher Education Society Project (Grant No. WY-D-006).
Acknowledgments: Not applicable.
Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Authenticity: This manuscript is an original work
Artificial Intelligence Statement: In this paper the authors only utilized Doubao and NetEase Youdao Translation Tools to assist with formatting adjustments during the revision process. The authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and they took full responsibility for the content of the publication.

About the Authors:

Xia Peng is an associate professor at Jiangxi College of Foreign Studies and a visiting scholar at Jiangxi Normal University. Her research focuses on public English teaching.
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2952-6711

Xinjian Hu is a professor at Jiangxi Normal University and holds a Ph.D. His research interests include foreign language education, teacher education, computer-assisted language learning, and educational linguistics. ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9045-8132

Caiyun Cheng is a Senior High School Teacher of the Yaohu Campus of the Affiliated Middle School of JXNU, who has been teaching English in high school for more than 20 years. ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9981-9720

Zhengjun Yang is an associate professor at Jiangxi Normal University. His research focuses on translation studies and English language teaching theory.
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9886-9552

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