

# *Overview of China English Teaching Research Based on China Daily*

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**Abstract:** Given the lack of Chinese culture in the current English textbooks of higher vocational colleges in China, China English teaching based on China Daily news reading is a necessary supplement to the English classroom of higher vocational colleges. This paper verifies the benefits of integrating China Daily news reading into higher vocational English teaching through one academic year teaching practice. It not only cultivates students to care about current events, but also enables them to master the English expressions of socialist politics, economy with Chinese characteristics and Chinese culture-loaded words. It enables students to better master and apply cross-cultural communicative knowledge and become better messengers to introduce China's stories to the world with cultural confidence and sensitivity to cultural differences.

## **1. Introduction**

With globalization, English as a lingua franca (ELF) has become a language transcends national boundaries and cultures. It is a neutral communication medium used by people with different mother tongues. Englishes bear imprint of different cultures, thus making English more diversified, more variable and more flexible.

### **1.1. Three Concentric Circles of English**

Many scholars studying the globalization of English such as Kachu [1] and Quirk [2] use “three concentric circles of English” to classify English varieties based on the regional environment of language use. The first category of English varieties refers to those used in the UK, USA, New Zealand and Canada where English is the native tongue. Quirk calls it “English as a native language” (ENL) which is the “inner circle” [2]. The second includes those varieties of English used in countries like India, Singapore, and Malaysia, with immigrants from Britain which is called “English as a second language” (ESL) or “the outer circle”. The third category refers to the varieties of English spoken as a foreign language (EFL) or the “expanding circle”. Under this guidance, British English and American English are not considered as the only two existing standard Englishes, but just as the two English varieties used in the two different countries [3].

## 1.2. China English

China English is one of the most important varieties in EFL. Rooted in Chinese culture, China English is a beneficial complement to and helpful enrichment of the English language. It serves as a very important tool for foreigners to understand China. Li Wenzhong defines China English as “an English variety that has Normative English as its core, expresses the social and cultural matters specific to China, free from Chinese interference or influence, enters the English language by means of transliteration, loan translation semantic regeneration and reflects Chinese features at the aspects of lexis, syntax and discourse [4].

## 2. The Necessity of Integrating China English in Higher Vocational College English Teaching

Along with the elevation of China's comprehensive national strength and international influence, China English is at a disadvantage when it comes to international media communication. President Xi said in the 30th anniversary of the founding of the overseas edition of People's Daily that we should tell China's stories and spread China's voices well in a way that overseas readers are willing to accept and in language that is easy to understand. He also points out at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China that “We will improve our capacity for engaging in international communication so as to tell China's stories well, present a true, multi-dimensional, and panoramic view of China, and enhance our country's cultural soft power.”

The 2021 edition of the Higher Vocational Education College English Curriculum Standards (hereinafter referred to as the "Curriculum Standards") issued by the Ministry of Education emphasizes that "multicultural communication" is one of the core qualities of the English discipline in higher vocational education. It refers to the understanding of foreign culture, effective cross-cultural communication and dissemination of Chinese culture through English in the context of globalization and the shared community of human." College students are encouraged use English to effectively disseminate Chinese culture, and enhance the country's soft power. China English is the most realistic and reasonable choice to spread the voice of China, promote Chinese culture. College students are an important part of promoting Chinese culture to the world.

As an important carrier of English teaching, most of the college English textbooks contents are based on the classic literary works and “standard English” works of English-speaking countries (ENL) [5]. The audio and video materials of the text are with British and American accents, and the storytellers are mostly British or American, reflecting the life and mainstream values of English-speaking countries. This is certainly beneficial for students to learn the “standard English”, but it also leads to the absence of Chinese culture and China English. College students can communicate with foreigners about Christmas and hamburgers, but they don't know to introduce Chinese culture to foreigners in English. For example, when they introduce Chinese festivals and customs like Peking Opera, Kongfu, Analects of Confucius, they are often stumped and remained tongue-tied for the lack of effective vocabulary, therefore fail to express their meaning. So, it is of pressing importance to add China English content in higher vocational English teaching to familiarize students with culture-loaded words and cross-cultural communicative knowledge and help them to become better messengers to tell China's stories to the world with cultural confidence and sensitivity to cultural differences.

As a national-level mainstream news website, China Daily is under the administration of the Information Office of The State Council (Foreign Communication Office of the CPC Central Committee). It is the largest English information portal in China and the most influential and authoritative English e-newspaper in China. The website serves as a main front to tell China's stories and spread China's voices in China English. The English news is a cross-cultural communication by nature. Compared with textbooks, the website updates quickly and keeps up with heated social issues

and current affairs. It not only cultivates students to establish correct values, but also enables them to learn the expression of politics, economy and culture with Chinese characteristics in China English. Students are also encouraged to master the correct culture-loaded words and the general knowledge of cross-cultural communication, build cultural confidence in cross-cultural communication, and assume the responsibility of spreading Chinese culture and telling China's stories.

### 3. The Implementation of English Teaching Based on China Daily

Apart from textbooks, China Daily news reading is added in the English class for a total 576 students in Class 1-12 of pharmacy major, grade 21 in Suzhou Vocational Health College for one academic year (September 2021 - June 2022). China Daily news effectively makes up for the regret of aphasia of China English in textbooks, familiarize students with English expressions of Chinese culture. Given the huge amount of news generated on China Daily, the following four principles are applied when selecting news:

(1) News that matches the theme of current subjects. When talking about environmental protection, news on the advocacy of low-carbon lifestyle and Beautiful China Initiative would be chosen. Teachers will guide students to think about how to live a green life and promote low-carbon lifestyle.

(2) News matching with students' majors. For example, news videos on the collective purchasing of drugs by the National Social Security Administration would be introduced to the pharmacy students. Teachers can also inspire students to make medicine more affordable while still leave pharmaceutical companies reasonable profits.

(3) News on current affairs, hot issues and people's livelihood that draws students' attention. For example, students may want to know about the epidemic prevention and control guidance change in recent days. Teachers can guide students to pay attention to the determination of the Chinese government to put people's health first and master related English expressions.

(4) News of on general Chinese culture based on the time and season. For example, the 24 Solar Terms, traditional Chinese festivals and traditional culture. Teacher can also compare the Chinese festivals with the western festivals, so that students can get cross-cultural communicative knowledge. Students learn to promote Chinese traditional cultures in English, build cultural confidence, and strengthen cross-cultural communication skills.

Under the guidance of the Curriculum Standard, the situational teaching method and the task-based teaching method are applied. News videos are used to introduce or create Chinese cultural scenarios, so that students can gain perceptual understanding in cultural situations and increase their interest in learning. For example, when learning Chinese festival culture, teachers can do scene simulation and role play together with students to help them deepen their knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture and English expressions of Chinese culture, activate their thoughts, and therefore improve teaching effectiveness. Teachers give specific and operable communicative tasks. Students can learn through these practices, i.e. "learning by doing". For example, when learning the theme of health, teachers can give a scenario that "a foreign friend named Thomas comes to visit you at home, and your mother makes a nourishing broth. Thomas is curious about the efficacy of various traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) in the broth. Can you explain to him about the Chinese philosophy of "One Root of Medicine and Food" as to the relationship between food and medicine and publicize TCM culture to him? Students are encouraged to learn and master relevant knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine culture in the process of completing cross-cultural communication tasks.

The teaching implementation of China Daily news reading is divided into three links.

Before class—Teachers choose China Daily news according to the above four principles and post them on the online platform, and assign learning tasks; students can have group discussion and independent exploration and come up with a group report on the task. This link aims to cultivate

students' independent learning ability, team cooperation and develop good habits of self-study, and achieves one of the four core requirement of “self-study” in the Curriculum Standards.

In class—Through group reports, students improve their ability to express in China English, and internalize China English; teacher evaluation and student evaluation; Teachers guide students to critical thinking and supplement related knowledge and expressions. This part aims to strengthen cultural confidence, further understand and respect diverse cultures, be able to tell China’s stories and spread Chinese culture in English, and therefore achieve one of the four core requirements of “multi-cultural communication” in the Curriculum Standard.

After class—By completing the critical thinking tasks assigned by the teacher, students can identify and understand the different language expressions and the underlying thinking logics across culture. The purpose of this part is to help the students to improve their logical, critical and innovative thinking, and establish a sense of community with a shared future for mankind. Core requirement of “improvement on language and thinking” is therefore achieved.

In terms of teaching effect evaluation, a comprehensive assessment method is adopted, including testing papers, practical application ability and daily performance. Teaching evaluation includes a pre-test and a post-test of China English vocabulary, questionnaire, and individual interviews with students and teachers involved in the project.

#### **4. Implementation Effect of English Teaching Based on China Daily**

In September 2021, the project team chose 576 non-English majors from Pharmacy Class 1-12, Grade 21, Suzhou Vocational Health College to conduct a China English vocabulary pre-test on the status quo on China English learning. Then the team conducted one-on-one interviews with 10 students and 5 English teachers for the existing problems and status quo.

After one academic year of English teaching based on China Daily, in June 2022, the research team conducted a China English vocabulary post-test, and again randomly selected 10 students and 5 teachers to conduct one-to-one interviews on the implementation process and effect of the project.

This project team used Sojump (Wenjuanxing) as the online platform to test the China English vocabulary of 21 Grade pharmacy students in 2021.09 and June 2022. Some of the questions were referred to the questionnaires of Shepard’s in 1997[6].

The test consisted of three parts. The first part was the basic information of the subjects. The second part was the translation from Chinese to English, including 50 Chinese cultural-loaded words, covering ideological and political vocabulary, Chinese history, art, festivals, literature, customs, food and other aspects. Some experts mentioned that some of the words involved in the questionnaire were rare. According to the opinions of the experts, our project team modified the questionnaire. The third part was writing, which required the subjects to tell the story of Shennong tasting herbs in English. The full score was 100 points. The test lasted 45 minutes. SPASS26.0 was used for consistency reliability analysis of this questionnaire, and its Cronbach's alpha was 0.756(higher than 0.7), indicating that this questionnaire has good internal consistency.

For the Chinese to English vocabulary translation, the teaching effect was very obvious as can be seen in Table 1.

The overall accuracy rate was low, with only 6 questions reached accuracy rate above 60%. They were T36 Chinese New Year, T39 dumplings, T40 Kung fu, T38 moon cake, T42 chopsticks and T48 Mid-Autumn Festival. These six words are all high frequency words in daily life. For the translation of Spring Festival, the most important Chinese traditional festival, the accuracy rate reached the highest 82.52%. Other high accuracy words translation included dumplings, kung fu, moon cake, all commonly used traditional culture bearer words. The types of words with high error rate are about the ideological and political, classical Chinese literature, Chinese history and traditional art. The

possible reason was that students had little contact with the English translation of such words in daily life. With insufficient input, naturally they cannot produce correct translation. After one school year of China English teaching based on China Daily reading, our team conducted a China English vocabulary (post-test) online. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 1: accuracy rate of vocabulary (pre-test)

Accuracy rate	Total number	questions
$P \leq 20\%$	29	T7, T12, T22, T16, T26, T5, T21, T3, T14, T27, T41, T17, T19, T30, T11, T18, T2, T29, T4, T9, T10, T15, T33, T35, T46, T37, T50, T45, T49
$20\% < P \leq 40\%$	8	T25, T6, T8, T13, T20, T43, T44, T23
$40\% < P \leq 60\%$	7	T21, T24, T1, T28, T31, T32, T34
$60\% < P \leq 80\%$	4	T38, T40, T42, T48
$80\% < P \leq 100\%$	2	T36, T39

Table 2: accuracy rate of vocabulary (post-test)

Accuracy rate	Total number	Questions
$P \leq 20\%$	5	T46, T37, T50, T45, T49
$20\% < P \leq 40\%$	7	T25, T6, T8, T13, T20, T43, T44,
$40\% < P \leq 60\%$	17	T21, T24, T1, T28, T31, T32, T34, T41, T5, T21, T3, T14, T27, T17, T19, T30, T11
$60\% < P \leq 80\%$	17	T38, T40, T42, T48, T18, T2, T29, T4, T9, T12, T22, T16, T26, T10, T15, T23, T7
$80\% < P \leq 100\%$	4	T36, T39, T33, T35

The comparison of Table 1 and Table 2 shows that the accuracy rate has been greatly improved. The number of questions with the correct rate less than 20% was reduced from 29 to 5. The number for  $20\% < P \leq 40\%$  questions was reduced by one. The number of  $40\% < P \leq 60\%$  questions was increased from 7 to 17. The number of questions with  $60\% < P \leq 80\%$  was increased by 13. Questions with correct rate over 80% were increased from 2 to 4. Among them, ideological and political vocabulary improved the most. The possible reason was both teachers and students paid attention to the teaching and learning of ideological and political vocabulary learning. The reading materials on ideological and political field are also very rich in China Daily.

In the writing section of the pre-test, all students handed in blank papers. The reason was that students have just entered the college and do not know much about the culture of traditional Chinese medicine, let alone how to express it in English. In the post-test, one-third of the students in the writing section gave a gist of the story of Shennong tasting herbs, but they could not went any further such as give specific description. They did not know how to translate the specific expressions of Chinese descendants, herbal medicine, detoxification. The rest two-thirds still turned in the blank paper. It was most likely due to the lack of translation training in traditional Chinese medicine culture and insufficient input related to the pharmaceutical major.

In terms of scores, the pre-test score average was 42.85 with 13.9% pass rate; the average for post-test was 72.10 with 70.2% passing rate. Compared with the pre-test, the average score of the post-test increased by 29.15, and the pass rate increased by 56.3%. Among them, the number of students fell in the 60-79 score sector increased the most, which was 117. Figure 1 shows the effectiveness of this project proved by pre and post-test comparison.

Through the interviews with students, it is found that students have acquired and accumulated certain knowledge on Chinese culture, but in terms of China English, they only knew the English words commonly seen or used in life, such as important Chinese festivals and food. They didn't learn China English systematically. Students already have the awareness of learning China English, but

textbooks used in middle schools didn't provide them with such content. After entering Suzhou Vocational Health College, students took part in this project and learned the correct English expressions on China's society, economy, culture, literature and other themes. Students said these before-class activities like watching videos, reading news materials, group discussion are conducive to developing independent learning habit. On-class activities like group report made them more confident in oral expression. After-class activities like critical thinking and cultural comparison deepened their understanding on cross cultural communications.

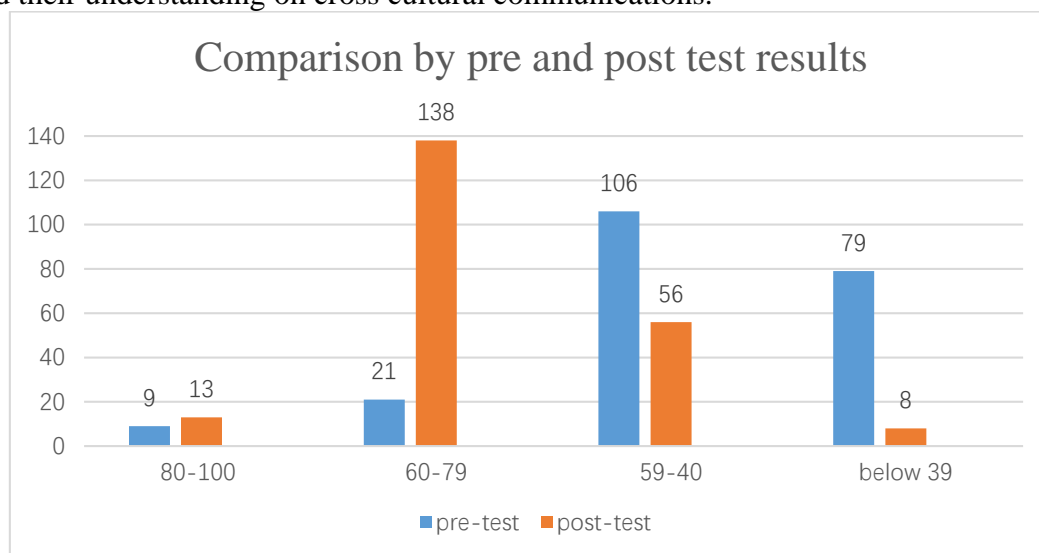


Figure 1: Comparison by pre and post test results

Through the interviews with five teachers involved in the project, all said that the overall level of China English of freshman students was low. This was due to two possible reasons. On the one hand, there is no special training for China English expression in middle school English teaching; on the other hand, there is a lack of relevant vocabulary for Chinese culture in the English language. The current textbook "Successful English for Vocational Colleges" lacks relevant content on Chinese culture expression. There would be insufficient China English input if English teachers simply rely on the textbook to teach English. In order to enlarge students' China English vocabulary and cultivate students' cross-cultural communication ability, it is necessary to supplement extracurricular China English materials. By adding China Daily for one academic year, our project team supplemented the input of China English in and out of class to help students internalize and produce output, which greatly improved students' cross-cultural ability and the ability to tell China's stories in English. Some teachers also mentioned that due to limited teaching hours and college English teachers' unfamiliarity with students' pharmacy major, the combination of this project and pharmacy major is insufficient.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the one school year of China English teaching with supplement reading from China Daily as well as the pre and post testing results, our team come to the conclusion that majority of higher vocational students benefit to a large extent in the accumulation of China English vocabulary and therefore are able to tell China's stories with confidence and fluency. Students not only develop the habit of caring about current events, but also master the English expressions of socialist politics, economy with Chinese characteristics and Chinese culture-loaded words. During news reading, students become more attentive to cross-cultural communicative knowledge and become better messengers to tell China's stories to the world with cultural confidence and sensitivity to cultural differences.

Due to the limited time of implementation, class hours and the limited numbers of teaching staff involved, the China Daily reading materials still lack the progressiveness and systematisms even been classified according to the subject. In addition, due to the characteristics of news, some time-sensitive news cannot be used by the next grade, which may bring certain difficulties to future teaching. The combination of China English teaching with pharmaceutical major is not sufficient. More news related to traditional Chinese medicine culture can be added.

In addition, in the implementation of this project, it is found that there is a lack of authoritative scale or standards of China English for higher vocational students. Therefore, China Standards of English (CSE) was referred and modified by the project team to conduct pre and post vocabulary test and served as an important evaluation of the project's effectiveness.

Some teachers also pointed out that the existing China English vocabulary is mainly collected and accumulated by teachers and students on their own. If there was a Chinese-English dictionary on China English, it would greatly facilitate the teaching and learning of China English.

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