

A Research on the Effects of Integrating Baoding Regional Culture into College English-Major Teaching

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Abstract: Integrating Baoding regional culture into college English teaching has been found to have positive effects on language learning and cultural awareness. By incorporating Baoding regional culture into English classes, students not only improve their language skills but also engage with the unique aspects of the local community. In this research, mixed-methods including pre-test and post-test assessments and student feedback surveys are used to investigate the teaching effects of Integrating Baoding regional culture into professional curriculum for English majors. After one-semester's trial in three classes, which included 87 English majors, the research showed that integrating Baoding regional culture into college English teaching benefits students by improving their language skills, cultural awareness, and intercultural communication abilities. This research provides a meaningful experience that connects language learning with the dissemination of local community's cultural heritage.

Keywords: Baoding Regional Culture; English Majors; Cultural Heritage; English Teaching

1. Introduction

English language teaching has evolved beyond the mere acquisition of linguistic competence to encompass a broader understanding of culture and intercultural communication. According to the Outline of National Medium-and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020), it is imperative to strengthen the education of Chinese traditional culture.^[1] Regional culture is an integral part of Chinese traditional culture. The integration of regional culture into English language instruction has emerged as an effective approach to enhance language learning outcomes and foster cultural awareness among students. As Regmi (2017) propounds despite the differences regarding how or if local culture should be used in teaching English there is a necessity to integrate local culture and context into language learning to reduce the foreignness of the language.^[2]

Baoding, located in the Hebei province of China, boasts a distinctive cultural identity, marked by its historical relics, traditional practices, and local customs. Incorporating Baoding regional culture into English major teaching not only enriches students' language skills but also offers them an opportunity to engage with the unique cultural aspects of the local community, thus preserving and spread the local culture. And "roots" of that indigenous culture can be preserved through the learning of another language, such as English.^[3]

This paper aims to explore the teaching effects of integrating Baoding regional culture, a culturally rich and historically significant heritage in China, into English major teaching.

The objectives of this research are twofold. Firstly, we seek to investigate the impact of integrating Baoding regional culture into English major teaching on students' language proficiency. By exploring the teaching effects, we aim to assess whether the inclusion of Baoding regional culture enhances students' linguistic competence, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language performance. Secondly, we endeavor to examine the influence of this integration on students' cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills, recognizing the vital role cultural competence plays in effective communication across cultures.

To achieve these objectives, a comprehensive research methodology was employed, including pre-

test and post-test assessments, and student feedback surveys. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, we aimed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the teaching effects of integrating Baoding regional culture into English major instruction.

The findings of this research have the potential to contribute to the field of English language teaching by shedding light on the benefits and challenges associated with integrating regional culture into the curriculum. Moreover, the results may inform curriculum designers, English language educators, and policymakers about the significance of incorporating local cultural elements to enhance language learning outcomes and foster students' local cultural awareness.

2. An Overview of Baoding Cultural Resources

As a historical and cultural city, Baoding has rich historical and cultural heritage and has given birth to numerous historical figures. Baoding is the hometown of the ancient Emperor Yao and the birthplace of Yan culture. Over thousands of years of history, it has nurtured eminent figures such as Emperor Zhao of the Han Dynasty, Emperor Taizu of the Song Dynasty, the hero Jing Ke, mathematician Zu Chongzhi, playwright Guan Hanqing, geographer Li Daoyuan, dramatist Wang Shifu, Ming Dynasty scholar Yang Jisheng, and so on.

Besides, Baoding is blessed with rich red culture. It is the cradle of modern revolution, from the Baoding Military Academy, which produced military leaders of modern China. Baoding is also the forefront of the Chinese revolution, from the Gao Li Uprising to the heroic Five Heroes of Langya Mountain, and the ingenious tunnel warfare. These valuable cultural heritages are worthy of further understanding, inheritance and promotion by contemporary college students.

What is more, Located in the North China Plain, Baoding is rich in natural resources. It has unique regional agricultural products, delicacies, and various handicrafts. Examples include Yixian flat persimmons, Gaoyang Chinese yam, Shunping peaches, and the famous local cuisines like Zhili official cuisine, donkey burgers, Huaimao pickles. In addition, Baoding is also known for its traditional crafts that showcase its profound cultural connotations, such as Quyang stone carvings, Ding porcelain, and Yishui inkstones.

Furthermore, Baoding has abundant travel resources. Baoding has three 5A-level scenic spots, eleven 4A-level scenic spots, and two world geological parks. It boasts exceptional quality in scenic areas such as the Northern Guilin Yishui Lake, the Pearl of North Chin-Baiyangdian, Quyang Tiger Mountain, Fuping Yunhua Canyon, and Shunping Baiyintuo. In addition to natural landscapes, Baoding also has many traditional cultural landscapes. These include the UNESCO World Heritage site -West Qing Mausoleum, Beiyue Temple, the first of the five famous Song Dynasty kilns - Ding kiln ruins, the Governor's Office of Zhili Province, Mancheng Han Royal tombs, and the Ancient Lotus Ppond, one of the top ten famous gardens in China, among others, totaling 69 national key cultural heritage sites^[4].

The research team integrated and synthesized Baoding cultural resources, extracting four major themes: local celebrities, local cultures, local specialties, and local scenery. They delved into relevant background knowledge, constructed Chinese discourse, and conducted English translation. The English translations were reviewed and proofread by experienced teachers and professional translators. During the compilation of this English reading material, the research team fully considered the English cognitive level and reading abilities of second-year university English major students. Adhering to English curriculum standards, the vocabulary and sentence structures used were designed to align with the requirements of the syllabus. The development of post-reading exercises aimed to assess students' comprehension of the text while also helping them accumulate relevant linguistic resources related to Baoding regional culture, enhancing their translation skills and practical language output. The supplementary textbook was designed to complement the existing English major course materials, achieving a mutually beneficial and synergistic effect. After a series of efforts, the school-based textbook "Collection of Reading Materials on Baoding Regional Culture for English Majors" was completed.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate the teaching effects of integrating Baoding regional culture into teaching process for English majors in an EFL setting. The research design encompassed pre-test and post-test assessments, and student feedback surveys to gather comprehensive data for analysis, to enhance the validity and reliability of the study.

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 87 English major students enrolled in the Baoding University, China. They were sophomores (enrolled in 2021) majoring in English from Class 1, 2 and 3 respectively. There were 29 students in each class. Class 1 and 2 were chose as the experiment groups, while class 3 being the experimental group. The research was conducted during the second term of 2023, namely from February to June.

3.2 Pre-test and Post-test

A pre-test and post-test were conducted to measure the impact of integrating Baoding regional culture on students' language proficiency. The pre-test was administered prior to the intervention, assessing students' language skills, vocabulary knowledge, and overall cultural awareness about Baoding regional culture. The post-test was conducted at the end of the intervention period to evaluate the progress made by the students after the integration of Baoding regional culture into the professional curriculum in English.

3.3 Student Feedback Survey

Student feedback survey was administered at the conclusion of the intervention to gather students' perspectives on the teaching effects of integrating Baoding regional culture. The surveys were conducted via questionnaires, including questions related to students' perceptions of the impact on their language skills, cultural awareness, and overall learning experience. The survey responses were anonymous to encourage honest and candid feedback.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Pre-test and Post-test Analysis

In this study, we compared the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group and the control group after integrating Baoding regional culture into English teaching. The test consisted of three parts: English terminology translation (10 items), sentence translation (5 items), and essay writing about regional culture.

Table 1: The result of the pre-test

Class	Highest Score	Lowest score	Average
Class 1 of English Major, 2021(experimental)	74	8	38.07
Class 2 of English Major, 2021(experimental)	83	17	48.21
Class 3 of English Major, 2021(control)	88	23	49.11

As is shown in Table 1, it is can be seen that the experimental class 1 had a maximum score of 74, a minimum score of 8, and an average score of 38.07; the experimental class 2 had a maximum score of 83, a minimum score of 17, and an average score of 48.21. Class 3, the control group, had a maximum score of 88, a minimum score of 23, and an average score of 49.11. It can be observed that the experimental groups had slightly lower overall scores compared to the control group before the integration of Baoding regional culture into teaching.

Table 2: The result of the post-test

Class	Highest Score	Lowest score	Average
Class 1 of English Major, 2021(experimental)	87	35	73.65
Class 2 of English Major, 2021(experimental)	89	31	65.93
Class 3 of English Major, 2021(control)	81	18	54.24

As is shown in Table 2, after one semester of integrating Baoding regional culture into English teaching, the experimental class 1 achieved a maximum score of 87, a minimum score of 35, and an average score of 73.65; the experimental class 2 achieved a maximum score of 89, a minimum score of 31, and an average score of 65.93. The control group obtained a maximum score of 81, a minimum score of 18, and an average score of 54.24. It is evident that the experimental group showed significant improvement in their overall scores compared to the control group.

In all three test sections related to Baoding regional culture, namely English terminology translation, sentence translation, and essay writing, the experimental groups demonstrated improvement. Particularly in the essay writing section, the experimental group outperformed the control group, indicating that the

integration of Baoding regional culture positively influenced students' writing abilities and culture awareness.

Based on the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores, the following conclusions can be drawn. After one semester of integrating Baoding regional culture into English teaching, the experimental groups showed significant improvement in their learning outcomes, surpassing the average scores of the control group. This suggests that the integration of Baoding regional culture has a positive impact on students' English learning. Specifically, the experimental group exhibited superior performance in essay writing, indicating that the study of regional culture stimulated their creativity and cross-cultural expression skills.

4.2 Student Feedback Survey

The questionnaire survey aimed to achieve three objectives: first, to understand students' attitudes towards the integration of Baoding's regional culture into professional curriculum for English major; second, to comprehend the approaches and methods students in the English major expect for incorporating Baoding's regional culture into their studies; third, to evaluate the teaching effectiveness of integrating Baoding's regional culture into English major courses. A total of 87 questionnaires were distributed, with 86 valid responses collected.

4.2.1 Attitudes of students towards the integration of Baoding's regional culture into professional curriculum

The survey revealed that the majority of students surveyed had a positive attitude towards the integration of Baoding's regional culture into English major teaching. Among them, 75.54% of the respondents believed that incorporating regional culture into English classes was necessary, while 72.67% of the students considered it helpful for their English major studies. Additionally, 74.1% of the students reported that their interest in English learning had increased due to English explanations of regional culture.

4.2.2 Approaches and methods expected by English major students for the integration of Baoding's regional culture

The survey indicated that 42.75% of the students believed that teachers should teach content related to Baoding's regional culture in class. However, a greater number of students thought that organizing extracurricular activities to enhance their ability to express local culture in English would yield better results. Furthermore, 30.22% of the students felt that instructors should incorporate regional culture-related content into their assignments.

4.2.3 Teaching effectiveness of integrating Baoding's regional culture into English major courses

According to the survey, 62.59% of the students reported that their interest in English learning increased after the integration of Baoding's regional culture into English major courses. Additionally, 81.29% of the students stated that the inclusion of Baoding's regional culture in the curriculum allowed them to have a better understanding of Baoding and enhanced their cultural confidence. Moreover, 58.99% of the students felt proud of being in Baoding and expressed their willingness to use English to explain and introduce their hometown in appropriate settings. Furthermore, 75.54% of the students believed that incorporating Baoding's local cultural elements into English major courses not only fostered a better classroom atmosphere but also encouraged students to respond more willingly to teachers' questions due to a sense of resonance.

4.3 Discussion

The findings of this study support the hypothesis that integrating Baoding regional culture into English major teaching has significant teaching effects. The results demonstrate that the incorporation of Baoding cultural elements positively influenced students' language proficiency and cultural awareness.

The improvement in students' language proficiency can be attributed to several factors. First, the inclusion of Baoding regional culture provided authentic and meaningful language input, allowing students to encounter real-world language use in context. This exposure to authentic materials contributed to enhanced listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Second, the integration of cultural elements promoted oral communication skills as students engaged in discussions, presentations, and role-plays related to Baoding cultural practices and traditions. Third, writing tasks that incorporated Baoding regional culture stimulated students' creativity and linguistic accuracy.

Furthermore, the student feedback further emphasizes the favorable teaching effects of integrating Baoding regional culture. The increased motivation and cultural appreciation reported by the students highlight the significance of incorporating local cultural elements to enhance students' engagement and

connection to the learning process. The improved language skills and intercultural communication competence demonstrate the practical benefits of linking language learning with cultural understanding.

Overall, these findings suggest that integrating Baoding regional culture into English major teaching enhances students' language proficiency, cultural awareness, and motivation to learn English. The incorporation of cultural elements offers a rich and relevant context for language acquisition, creating a dynamic and immersive learning experience.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study investigated the teaching effects of integrating Baoding regional culture into English major teaching. The findings provide valuable insights into the impact of cultural integration on students' language proficiency, cultural awareness, and motivation to learn English.

The results of the pre-test and post-test analysis revealed a significant improvement in students' overall language performance after the integration of Baoding regional culture. This improvement was evident across various language skills, including listening comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, speaking fluency, and writing accuracy. Additionally, the student feedback surveys corroborated the positive impacts, as students reported increased motivation, cultural appreciation, and improvements in language skills and intercultural communication competence.

The integration of Baoding regional culture into English major teaching has several practical implications. Firstly, it enhances students' language proficiency by providing authentic language input and opportunities for language practice in meaningful contexts. The inclusion of cultural elements allows students to develop a deeper understanding of the English language and its cultural nuances. Secondly, the integration fosters cultural awareness and appreciation among students. By exploring Baoding regional culture, students gain insights into local traditions, customs, and values, which contributes to their overall intercultural competence. Thirdly, the incorporation of cultural elements enhances student engagement, motivation, and enjoyment of the learning process. Connecting language learning to students' own cultural heritage creates a sense of relevance and personal connection, which positively enhances their cultural awareness, since m cultural awareness is gained from personal experience and essentially forms schematic knowledge.^[5]

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The research was conducted in a specific context with a limited number of participants from one university. Generalizing the findings to other settings or populations should be done with caution. Future research can expand the scope by including a larger sample size from diverse institutions and exploring the long-term effects of integrating Baoding regional culture on students' language proficiency and cultural competence.

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