

# Designing Situational Oral Activities on Hometown Specialties for Junior High English: A Cultural Identity Adaptation Approach

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**Abstract:** *In the educational context of integrating globalization and localization, junior high school English teaching must balance the instrumental function of language with its cultural educational value. As a tangible carrier of regional culture, hometown specialties serve as a vital link between language learning and cultural identity. Based on the Cultural Identity Adaptation Theory, this paper explores design approaches for situational oral activities introducing hometown specialties across three dimensions: cultural cognition, emotion, and practice. It constructs a trinity “cognition-emotion-practice” framework to resolve the separation of culture and language in current oral instruction. This study not only offers practical pathways to enhance students’ cross-cultural communicative competence and local cultural identity but also provides a referable paradigm for the in-depth implementation of culturally immersive English teaching in junior high schools.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural Identity Adaptation; Junior High School English; Oral Activity Design; Introduction of Hometown Specialties*

## 1. Introduction

Under the context of in-depth integration of globalization and localization, junior high school English teaching has gone beyond the single dimension of linguistic instrumentality and undertaken the dual mission of cultural inheritance and cross-cultural communication. The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) clearly states that English teaching should “deepen students’ understanding and recognition of fine traditional Chinese culture, strengthen their patriotism and awareness of building a community with a shared future for mankind, cultivate their morality, and enhance their cultural literacy and social responsibility”[1]. Fine traditional Chinese culture exerts profound influences on students’ growth, social progress and national development. As tangible symbols of regional culture, hometown specialties act as an important bridge linking language acquisition with the recognition of Chinese culture.

However, systematic, high-quality and student-oriented teaching resources concerning fine traditional Chinese culture are insufficient in current junior high school English courses[2]. The junior high school stage is a critical period for students to develop language competence, yet oral English training has long been trapped in the predicament of prioritizing written tests over oral expression[3]. Besides, existing oral teaching designs for introducing hometown specialties are plagued by the separation of cultural connotation and language expression as well as fragmented activity arrangements, which fail to meet practical teaching demands and call for theoretical support and practical innovation.

## 2. Basic Connotation of Cultural Identity Adaptation Theory

Adaptation is a state of existence defined by universal symbiosis. It encompasses the adaptation between humans and nature, between humans and society, among people, and between human thinking and their own personal development[4]. The Cultural Identity Adaptation framework discussed in this paper integrates cross-cultural communication theories with educational psychology theories. The theoretical origin can be traced back to Homi Bhabha’s Third Space Theory and Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Community Theory. Bhabha proposed that cultural identity is dynamically constructed and negotiated through interactions between different cultures, and English classrooms can function as the third space for students to establish bicultural identity[5]. Anderson’s theory holds that regional cultural

symbols are essential media for constructing group cultural identity, which lays a foundation for combining the introduction of specialties with the formation of cultural identity[6]. Rooted in local teaching contexts, this theory refines three interrelated and progressive adaptive dimensions: cultural cognition, cultural emotion and cultural practice, forming a closed loop of language learning, cultural recognition and identity construction.

### ***2.1. Cultural Cognition Adaptation: Matching Teaching Content with Students' Cultural Cognitive Level***

As the fundamental dimension, cultural cognition adaptation requires the selection and presentation of teaching content to conform to students' existing cultural cognitive level and cognitive rules, so as to avoid cultural comprehension barriers and language learning anxiety caused by cognitive disconnection. Its core logic lies in that students can only transform cultural understanding into language expression and further shape cultural identity on the premise of having basic cognition of cultural elements in teaching. This view is consistent with Hofstede's viewpoint on cultural cognition, which advocates aligning teaching content with learners' cognitive starting points to reduce learning difficulties[7].

### ***2.2. Cultural Emotion Adaptation: Resonating Teaching Activities with Students' Cultural Emotional Needs***

As the core dimension, cultural emotion adaptation emphasizes that teaching activities should stimulate students' emotional recognition of local culture, arouse their sense of cultural pride in language learning, and motivate them to actively build cross-cultural identity featuring local cultural inheritance. The core logic is that language is not merely a communication tool, but also a carrier of emotions and identities. Only when students develop positive emotions towards culture can they integrate cultural connotations into language expression and realize heartfelt cross-cultural communication. John W. Berry's cross-cultural adaptation theory indicates that the construction of cross-cultural identity is not a one-way process of abandoning local culture and accepting foreign culture, but an integration of local cultural recognition and foreign cultural understanding[8]. Positive local cultural emotion is the core prerequisite for individuals to achieve integrated adaptation and establish bicultural identity, which is fully consistent with the proposition of cultural emotion adaptation.

### ***2.3. Cultural Emotion Adaptation: Resonating Teaching Activities with Students' Cultural Emotional Needs***

As the practical implementation dimension, cultural practice adaptation advocates designing teaching scenarios that simulate real cultural communication situations, enabling students to spread local culture in English through authentic tasks and realize seamless connection between classroom learning and practical application. Its core logic is that the construction of cultural identity needs the support of cognition and emotion as well as consolidation through practice. Students can truly build cross-cultural identity confidence only when they successfully disseminate local culture in English in real or simulated real situations. This dimension is highly consistent with the authentic task scenario concept in Willis's Task-based Language Teaching, which argues that the effectiveness of language learning depends on the similarity between teaching tasks and real-life situations, and higher similarity contributes to better improvement of students' practical language competence[9].

In conclusion, the three dimensions of Cultural Identity Adaptation Theory are mutually supportive: cultural cognition lays a foundation for understanding, cultural emotion serves as the core to stimulate willingness to express, and cultural practice guarantees practical application. Together they form a complete teaching chain of cognition-emotion-practice, providing clear theoretical framework and methodological guidance for the design of oral activities of introducing hometown specialties. (The teaching path mapping is shown in Figure 1.)

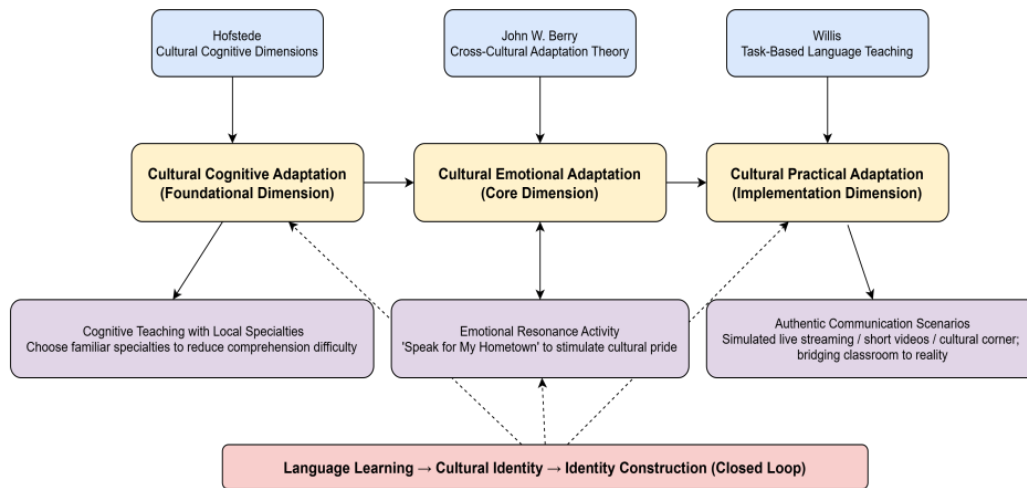


Figure 1: The Teaching Path Mapping

### 3. Research Methodology

Centering on oral English teaching of introducing hometown specialties in junior high schools, this study puts forward two core research questions: first, to explore students’ specific performance in cultural cognition, cultural emotion and cultural practice in such teaching activities; second, to design scientific oral English teaching plans covering teaching objectives, teaching content, teaching procedures and evaluation criteria based on Cultural Identity Adaptation Theory.

Adopting stratified purposive sampling, the research selects 120 Grade 8 students and 15 English teachers from two junior high schools in Lanzhou, Gansu Province (one urban public school and one suburban private school). Students in this grade have mastered basic English expressive ability and are in a critical period transforming passive local cultural cognition into active exploration, making the research samples highly representative.

The main research instruments include questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. (Table 1 shows the questionnaire survey.) The questionnaire sets questions from the three dimensions of cultural cognition, cultural emotion and cultural practice to fully investigate the current situation of oral English teaching. Eight students and three teachers are selected for one-on-one interviews lasting 15 minutes each with separate interview outlines for teachers and students, so as to dig deep into existing teaching problems and practical demands.

Table 1: The Sample Questionnaire

Dimension	Question No.	Question
Cultural Cognition	1	Can you describe the origin or production process of your hometown specialties in English?
	2	When introducing specialties, will you mention relevant folk tales in English?
	3	Do you understand the cultural significance (e.g., symbolic meaning) behind the specialties?
Cultural emotion	4	Do you feel proud when introducing hometown specialties in English?
	5	Are you willing to actively share personal experiences related to the specialties?
	6	Do you think introducing specialties can make you love your hometown more?
Cultural practice	7	Have you had real - life scenarios (e.g., receiving tourists) to introduce specialties in English?
	8	Can you respond to others’ English questions about the specialties?
	9	Can you design simple English scripts for introducing the specialties?

This study mainly adopts interview method and literature research method. Interviews are conducted in a neutral manner with proper follow-up questions to ensure authentic research data. Meanwhile, relevant literature is retrieved from Chinese and foreign academic databases to consolidate the theoretical basis of the research. The research is carried out in two phases: firstly, questionnaires and interview outlines are designed for field investigation with an effective questionnaire recovery rate of 96.7%, and thematic analysis is adopted to sort out existing teaching deficiencies; secondly, combined with survey results, a complete set of oral teaching designs for introducing hometown specialties is constructed in accordance with Cultural Identity Adaptation Theory. (The distribution of survey data is shown in Figure 2.)

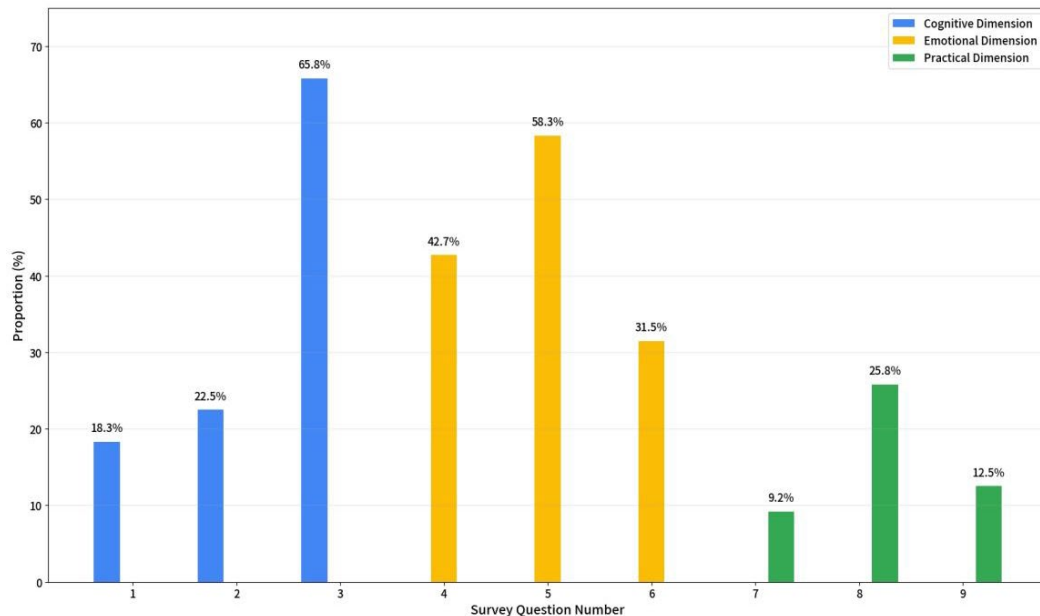


Figure 2: The Bar Chart of Survey Proportions

#### 4. Application of Cultural Identity Adaptation Theory in Oral English Teaching

##### 4.1. Students' Practical Performance in Three Dimensions

###### 4.1.1. Cultural Cognition: From Superficial Description to In-depth Interpretation

Questionnaire data show that only 18.3% of students can fully introduce the origin and production techniques of hometown specialties in English, 22.5% are able to mention relevant folk customs and stories, and 65.8% fail to understand the cultural implications behind local specialties. As a Grade 8 student from urban school stated, "I can only say simple sentences like 'My hometown specialty is beef noodles. It's delicious.', but I have no idea about its history or the English expressions of noodle-making techniques." This reflects that students are trapped in dual dilemmas of insufficient basic vocabulary and in-depth cultural aphasia when expressing local culture, with their cultural cognition remaining merely at the superficial material level.

###### 4.1.2. Cultural Emotion: From Passive Explanation to Active Recognition

Statistics reveal that 42.7% of students fail to feel proud when introducing hometown specialties in English, 58.3% are unwilling to share personal experiences related to local specialties, and only 31.5% hold the view that relevant introduction can deepen their love for hometown. A student from suburban school mentioned in the interview that introducing hometown specialties in English is just a compulsory learning task without special feelings. It indicates that the teaching of hometown specialty culture in English classes is merely formal task-oriented output, which fails to arouse students' emotional resonance with traditional Chinese culture and form active cultural recognition.

###### 4.1.3. Cultural Practice: From Classroom Simulation to Real-life Application

Only 9.2% of students have practical experience in introducing hometown specialties in English in real scenarios, 25.8% can respond to relevant questions in English, and 12.5% are capable of designing simple English introduction scripts for specialties. A senior English teacher with 12 years of teaching

experience admitted that restricted by practical safety factors, off-campus practical activities are rarely organized, and only role-playing is carried out in class, resulting in rigid and unnatural student expressions. It is obvious that oral practice is confined to closed classroom environments due to practical teaching constraints, leading to prevalent pseudo-communication in oral English teaching.

## **4.2. Oral English Activity Design Approaches Based on Cultural Identity Adaptation Theory**

### **4.2.1. Resource Construction and Situational Creation Strategies**

Based on the interview data, current oral English teaching on introducing hometown specialties faces two core issues: first, teachers' insufficient ability to explore cultural depth, often limiting themselves to guiding students in translating names without deeply interpreting cultural connotations; and second, fragmented activity design that lacks a coherent teaching chain connecting cognition, emotion, and practice. In response to these issues, the following strategies are proposed:

1) Build a “Hometown Specialty Cultural Resource Package” to solidify the foundation for cultural exploration.

① A Multi-dimensional Cultural Material Library: On one hand, this library needs to establish comprehensive and in-depth cultural archives. It should systematically organize the historical origins, production techniques, and folk stories of local specialties, accompanied by accurate English translations. For instance, in the Gansu Beef Noodles material, it provides standardized expressions on how to vividly describe unique techniques like “three rounds of water, three rounds of ash, and eighty-one rounds of kneading” in English. On the other hand, it must be equipped with rich audio-visual aids, incorporating relevant clips from documentaries like *A Bite of China* and simplified interview videos of veteran artisans (with English subtitles). This allows students to intuitively and comprehensively perceive the historical background and craftsmanship behind the specialties.

② Ready-to-use Teaching Case Collection: This collection includes 3-5 complete demonstration cases of “integrating culture into oral English teaching” (including instructional designs, PPT courseware, and showcases of student outcomes). These cases must clearly demonstrate how to guide students from merely translating names to deeply interpreting cultural connotations, providing teachers with transferable teaching exemplar.

③ Clearly Categorized Language Toolkit: In terms of core vocabulary, it should categorize and compile high-frequency words highly relevant to specialty culture, such as craftsmanship, folk custom, and origin. Regarding functional sentence patterns, it needs to provide structured expression scaffolds. Examples include: “This specialty originated in... when...” for introducing cultural backgrounds; “It’s made by... which reflects...” for vividly describing production techniques; and “I’m proud of it because...” for expressing inner pride. These tools help students transform scattered cultural information into standardized and fluent English expressions.

2) Create a “Three-stage Progressive” teaching context to build a coherent educational chain:

① Cognitive Context: Tracing and Decoding (approx. 10 minutes). In this phase, teachers should fully utilize the multimedia materials from the resource package to assign “specialty cultural tracing” tasks, using activities like “specialty picture guessing” or showcasing data from cultural tourism websites. Teachers should guide students to document the origins of specialties by interviewing elders and consulting resources during the teaching process. By integrating core vocabulary from the textbook’s “Hometown Culture” unit, teachers can help students use the “Origin + Features + Cultural Significance” sentence framework to transform scattered cultural information into organized English cognition.

② Emotional Context: Resonance and Confidence (approx. 5 minutes). To spark students’ awareness of cultural communication, teachers can introduce a real-life video case of a “Guangdong farmer woman introducing local specialties in English” and host a “My Specialty Memory” sharing session. By organizing discussions around “How does introducing local specialties in English help our hometown?”, teachers guide students to share family stories related to the specialties, activating personal emotional connections. Throughout this process, teachers should encourage students to incorporate local dialect features in their expression and focus their evaluation on emotional delivery rather than mere phonetic perfection, thereby enhancing students’ cultural confidence as “spokespersons for hometown culture.”

③ Practical Context: Application and Creation (approx. 20 minutes). This phase aims to provide real-world social practice scenarios and digital display platforms, realizing the transition from learning to using and finally to creating. Teachers can adopt the “class flea market” model to assign a “Specialty

Trade Fair” task, where students work in groups to complete a full-process simulation in English—from product introduction to price inquiry interactions, and finally to cultural explanation. Additionally, teachers can organize community practices, encouraging students to introduce hometown specialties to foreign residents or tourists and record their takeaways; or guide students to create “English Introduction to Specialties” short videos, integrating classroom learning and publishing them on social media platforms.

#### **4.2.2. Full-process Design of Teaching Implementation**

In response to students’ specific performance in cultural cognition, emotion, and practice, as well as the targeted improvement strategies for teachers’ instructional issues, this study’s instructional design is based on the theory of “Cultural Identity Adaptation” and mainly includes the following segments:

##### 1) Teaching Objectives:

① Cultural Cognition: Students will be able to explain the origin and craftsmanship of one hometown specialty in English, master vocabulary such as historical origin and handmade, and avoid vague descriptions.

② Cultural Emotion: Through sharing stories related to local specialties, students will enhance their sense of identity with hometown culture, allowing their oral expression to convey sincere emotions.

③ Cultural Practice: Students will be able to complete specialty introductions and answer questions in simulated scenarios using English, achieving the transformation of classroom knowledge into practical application.

##### 2) Selection of Teaching Content:

① Cognitive Materials: Core vocabulary includes specialty names (e.g., Laba garlic, Osmanthus cake) and cultural terms (e.g., ancient recipe). Sentence patterns are divided into two categories: ‘Background + Features’ (e.g., This specialty dates back to...) and interactive communication (e.g., Do you want to know how it’s made?).

② Emotional Materials: Building upon the “Hometown Culture” unit in the textbook, this includes supplementary clips from hometown specialty documentaries, simplified interviews with veteran artisans, as well as family specialty photos and childhood memories provided by students.

③ Practical Materials: Preparation of prop templates for the “Class Trade Fair” (English price tags, introduction cards) and provision of dialogue recordings of tourists inquiring about local specialties.

##### 3) Teaching Process Design (45 minutes):

① Warm-up (5 minutes): A mixed-cut video of hometown specialties with an English voiceover is played. Students are asked, “Which have you tried? What’s your memory?” Two students are then invited to share their experiences, thereby activating their cultural cognition and emotion.

② Presentation (10 minutes): The cultural background of the specialties (including their origins and craftsmanship) is explained, along with relevant vocabulary and sentence patterns. A sample cultural archive of local specialties is presented to guide students in transforming cultural information into English expressions.

③ Group Activity (15 minutes): In groups of four, students use pre-class materials to create “Specialty Cultural Cards” (filling in cultural backgrounds, personal stories, and designing interactive scripts), and take turns practicing within the group. The teacher provides scaffolding guidance during activity, correcting linguistic structures while encouraging students to organically integrate personal emotional experiences (such as “childhood memories”) into their specialty promotion, achieving a resonance between language use and emotional expression.

④ Presentation (10 minutes): An exhibition fair is organized, during which one representative from each group introduces the specialties in English while other groups ask questions. The teacher guides the activity with a focus on cultural accuracy, sincerity of emotion, and fluency of communication.

⑤ Summary (5 minutes): The highlights and shortcomings are summarized, and the key knowledge points are reiterated. Students are asked, “How do you feel about introducing specialties in English?”, thereby reinforcing their cultural identity and confidence in practice.

#### 4.2.3. Construction of a Multidimensional Evaluation Mechanism

Adopting a combination of process-oriented and outcome-oriented assessment, the evaluation dimensions are aligned with the cognition-emotion-practice framework of the Cultural Identity Adaptation theory.

##### ① Process-oriented Assessment (Weight: 40 points):

The teacher observes students' performance in group activities and records their participation in cultural discussions (Cognition, 15 points - 5 points for enthusiasm in cultural discussions, 5 points for accuracy in understanding cultural information, 5 points for the application of core vocabulary), story sharing (Emotion, 15 points - 5 points for willingness to share personal stories, 5 points for sincerity in emotional delivery, 5 points for expressions of cultural identity), and the use of sentence patterns for communication (Practice, 10 points - 5 points for participation in group activities, 5 points for flexibility in applying sentence patterns).

##### ② Outcome-oriented Assessment (Weight: 60 points):

The assessment adopts a weighting of 60% teacher evaluation and 40% peer evaluation. Scoring criteria for "Hometown Specialty Cultural Cards": Completeness of cultural information (8 points), emotional representation (6 points), and accuracy of English expression (6 points). Scoring criteria for the "Class Trade Fair" presentation: Cultural transmission (10 points), emotional appeal (10 points), ability to respond to questions (10 points), and language fluency (10 points).

##### ③ Application of Evaluation Results:

The final evaluation grade is determined by combining the scores of process-oriented assessment and outcome-oriented assessment: 90-100 points is "Excellent", 80-89 points is "Good", 70-79 points is "Qualified", and below 70 points is "Needs Improvement". For students who "Need Improvement", teachers should provide after-school tutoring (such as explaining cultural materials individually or practicing sentence patterns one-on-one) to help them improve. "Excellent" students can serve as hometown cultural spokespersons and participate in specialty introduction showcases at the school's cultural festival.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. Research Conclusions

Through questionnaires and interviews, this study reveals the core issues in the current oral English teaching of hometown specialties in junior high schools. At the student level, there are problems such as superficial cultural cognition, insufficient language proficiency, and low willingness to speak. At the teacher level, issues include inadequate attention to teaching, monotonous methods, and a lack of cultural integration. Based on the Cognition-Emotion-Practice strategies proposed under the "Cultural Identity Adaptation" theory, these issues can be effectively addressed by excavating the cultural connotations of local specialties, creating authentic interactive contexts, and designing effective teaching processes and reasonable evaluations.

### 5.2. Limitations and Prospects

The limitations of this study are as follows: Although two different types of schools were selected, both are located in Lanzhou City, Gansu Province, and do not cover schools in rural or remote areas, meaning the sample still has regional limitations. Additionally, students from different grades (such as Grade 7 and Grade 9) were not included, making it impossible to reflect the differences in learning needs across different cognitive stages. Furthermore, long-term teaching practice was not conducted, as the study remains at the design framework level, and the durability of the teaching effects requires further verification.

Future research can be deepened in three directions: First, subsequent studies can expand the sample scope to cover teachers and students from different regions both within and outside Gansu Province (such as rural areas in the Hexi Corridor and coastal cities in the east) and from different grades, further enhancing the universality of the activity design. Second, by integrating information technology, resources such as a "Hometown Specialty Cultural Database" (integrating text, images, and video resources) and an "Oral Practice APP" can be developed. These would rely on generative AI (Gen AI) to

provide multimodal real-time oral error correction and cultural context adaptation feedback, aiming to further enhance the interactivity and personalization of teaching. Third, a one-semester teaching experiment can be conducted, using pre-test and post-test comparisons (e.g., oral test scores, cultural identity scales) to verify the design's effectiveness, providing more sufficient empirical support for the application of the theory.

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