

Construction of Costume-Oriented English Curriculum in Textile Institutions under the Background of Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract: The in-depth advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative has set forth more stringent demands for the cultivation of composite international talents. Textile institutions, as universities with distinct industrial characteristics, face an urgent need to explore an in-depth integration pathway between English teaching and their professional features. Guided by the principle of mutual cultural appreciation, this paper focuses on the reform of college English courses in textile colleges. It proposes a framework for the construction of specialty courses, with costume culture serving as the carrier. The study first analyzes the commonalities in costume culture among countries along the Belt and Road and the textile industry's requirements for foreign exchanges. Based on this analysis, it constructs a three-in-one curriculum objective that encompasses "language proficiency - professional knowledge - cultural communication." A comprehensive curriculum system is designed, covering modules such as "costume Culture Translation," "Textile Science and Technology Translation," "Intercultural costume Project Practice," and "Interpretation and Translation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Techniques." To enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning, diverse teaching modes, including virtual simulation and school-enterprise cooperation, are introduced. This study offers a theoretical model and a practical exemplar for the localization and reconstruction of English courses in industry-specific universities. It contributes to the international dissemination of Chinese textile culture and fosters collaborative innovation between industry and education within the context of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Keywords: Belt and Road; Textile Institutions; College English; Costume-Oriented English Curriculum

1. Introduction

With the in-depth promotion of the "Belt and Road" initiative, the core position of China's textile industry in the global supply chain is becoming more and more prominent. Against this background, the demand for international talents in the textile industry has changed from a single technical type to a composite type of "language ability + professional knowledge + cultural communication".^[1] However, there are still two major pain points in English teaching in textile colleges and universities: firstly, the curriculum content is out of touch with the textile profession, and the traditional teaching of English for General Purposes (EGP) is difficult to meet the actual needs of enterprises for foreign trade negotiation and translation of technical documents, etc.; secondly, the cultivation of cross-cultural communication ability is insufficient, and the students have weak cognition of costume cultures in countries along the Belt and Road, resulting in a lack of internationalisation and a lack of knowledge of internationalisation. Secondly, the cultivation of intercultural communication skills is insufficient, and students' knowledge of the costume culture of the countries along the "Belt and Road" is weak, leading to frequent cultural misinterpretation in international cooperation.^[2] For example, a textile enterprise reported that its employees did not understand the taboos of costume etiquette in the Middle East, and they repeatedly violated the cultural sensitivities in business activities, which seriously affected the trust of cooperation. With the in-depth advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's textile industry has assumed an increasingly prominent position within the global supply chain. In this context, the demand for international talents in the textile sector has shifted from a singular focus on technical expertise to a composite profile encompassing "language proficiency, professional knowledge, and cultural communication" capabilities^[1]. However, English teaching in textile colleges and universities currently

faces two major challenges. Firstly, there is a disconnect between curriculum content and the textile profession. Traditional English for General Purposes (EGP) instruction fails to adequately address the practical needs of enterprises in areas such as foreign trade negotiations and the translation of technical documents. Secondly, the cultivation of intercultural communication skills remains inadequate. Students exhibit limited knowledge of costume cultures in countries along the Belt and Road, leading to frequent cultural misunderstandings in international collaborations. For instance, a textile enterprise reported that its employees were unaware of the taboos surrounding costume etiquette in the Middle East, resulting in repeated violations of cultural sensitivities during business activities and severely undermining trust in cooperative relationships [2].

Costume culture, serving as a dual carrier of material and spiritual values, represents not only the technical achievements of the textile industry but also the core symbol of mutual understanding among civilizations. From the interwoven pearl patterns in Dunhuang murals to the silk remnants discovered on the "Nanhai I" shipwreck along the Maritime Silk Road, costumes have consistently acted as a bridge for cross-cultural dialogue. Nevertheless, existing research predominantly focuses on the historical evolution of costume or design aesthetics, with limited systematic integration into language teaching [3]. Drawing on the theory of mutual cultural appreciation, this study proposes a framework for reforming the English language curriculum in textile universities, using costume culture as a carrier to address the interconnected issues of "language, profession, and culture." By constructing a "three-stage integration" curriculum system—comprising terminology decoding, cultural translation, and project practice—this study explores the transformational potential of costume symbols within language teaching. Additionally, it introduces innovative teaching modes such as virtual simulation and school-enterprise collaboration to facilitate the transition of English education from a purely instrumental focus to a more humanistic one. This approach not only contributes to the international dissemination of Chinese textile culture within the Belt and Road framework but also supports the broader development of Chinese culture. It offers a practical exemplar for the international promotion of Chinese textile culture and the fostering of collaborative innovation between industry and education under the Belt and Road Initiative.

2. Literature review

The promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative has significantly propelled the synergistic development of the textile industry in countries along the route. As a carrier of cultural symbols, the cross-cultural communication function of costume has garnered increasing attention within the academic community [4]. According to Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the patterns, colors, and silhouettes of costumes constitute a symbolic system of "energy-indication," and cross-cultural translation necessitates the equivalent transmission of symbolic meaning. For instance, the "bird pattern" on the Hundred Bird Clothes of the Miao ethnic group symbolizes nature worship. Its English translation must account for both the literal meaning ("bird pattern") and the cultural metaphor (ecological harmony).

At the practical level, the interpretation of non-material religious heritage (NRH) techniques and film and television translations have emerged as significant platforms for cultural mutual understanding. The AR tour system of cloud brocade developed by the Palace Museum allows overseas audiences to comprehend the philosophical wisdom behind the craft of "breaking the warp and weft" through bilingual narratives. The film and television drama "Twelve Hours of Chang'an" serves as a prime example, where the translation of costume terms (e.g. round-collar robe) has sparked academic debates on the differences between "alienation" and "naturalization" translation strategies [5]. These cases illustrate that the linguistic transformation of costume culture is not merely a technical issue but also a process of value dialogue, offering vivid interdisciplinary materials for English teaching. Existing textile English courses often exhibit a "triple disconnection":

Existing textile English courses are often "triply disconnected":

1) the Disconnection from Industrial Needs: There is an overemphasis on literature translation at the expense of cross-border e-commerce communication skills;

2) Cultural Dimension Deficit: Ninety-one percent of the courses fail to cover countries along the Belt and Road.

3) Monotonous Teaching Mode: The teaching mode remains predominantly teacher-centered, lacking innovative means such as virtual simulation and project-based learning.

In response to these challenges, school-based specialty curriculum development has emerged as a pivotal direction for reform. For example, Wuhan Textile University has integrated "Haikai cheongsam culture" into English teaching. Through the project "non-heritage workshop + virtual runway show," students can master the terminology of cheongsam (e.g. "frog button") while simultaneously understanding the history of women's liberation. This practice validates the feasibility of a "culture-driven ESP (English for Specific Purposes) program." By using costume as a link, constructing a closed-loop path of "terminology construction - cultural decoding - project output" can effectively bridge the gap between language teaching and professional practice. It provides a new paradigm for the cultivation of textile talents within the Belt and Road framework, offering students valuable opportunities to learn specialized terminology and engage with cross-cultural contexts.

3. Constructing the trinity of language proficiency - professional knowledge - cultural communication" as the goal of the programme

Under the auspices of the Belt and Road Initiative, the international development of the textile industry has imposed compound requirements on talent training, necessitating "barrier-free language communication, in-depth professional knowledge, and competent cultural communication." Guided by the theory of cultural mutual appreciation, the costume-oriented curriculum in textile colleges and universities transcends the universal framework of traditional public English courses. It constructs a three-dimensional, organically integrated course objective system by deeply integrating language teaching with the professional attributes of costume and the mission of Chinese cultural communication. This system not only adheres to the fundamental principles of language education but also underscores the orientation of industry-specific universities, thereby establishing a targeted framework for cultivating international talents who "know textile, master English, and communicate effectively."

The "Trinity" target system positions costume culture as the core link, integrating the three dimensions of language ability, professional knowledge, and cultural dissemination. It aims to nurture complex textile talents with a global perspective. The system transforms the symbolic value of costume culture into teaching resources through modular curriculum design, encompassing the following core modules:

- 1) Costume Culture Translation
- 2) Textile Science and Technology Translation
- 3) Intercultural costume Project Practice
- 4) Intangible Cultural Heritage costumes (Note: The original text included a redundant repetition of "Intangible Cultural Heritage costumes" which has been corrected by listing it once.)
- 5) Interpretation and Translation of Non-heritage Techniques

This modular design ensures a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to education, equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the global textile industry while fostering cross-cultural understanding and the effective dissemination of Chinese culture. By emphasizing language proficiency, professional cognition, and cultural dissemination, the programme prepares students to navigate the complexities of international business environments and contribute to the global exchange of textile-related knowledge and cultural values.

3.1 Language Proficiency Goal: Systematic Transition from General English to costume-Oriented English

Language proficiency constitutes the foundational medium for cross-cultural communication. The language objectives of the costume-oriented English curriculum transcend conventional university English proficiency requirements, emphasizing a precise adaptation to the contextual demands of the apparel industry. Within the multilingual and multicultural contexts of Belt and Road countries, students must demonstrate three core competencies:

3.1.1 Proficiency in Constructing a Professional Language System for the Apparel Domain

The curriculum facilitates mastery of specialized apparel industry vocabulary, including fabric terminology (e.g., jacquard, denim), process expressions (e.g., dyeing and finishing, 3D knitting), and international standards (e.g., AATCC test protocols). It establishes a progressive linguistic hierarchy—basic English → industry-general English → apparel-specific English—to enable precise

professional communication in apparel exhibitions, cross-border e-commerce, and global supply chain management. For instance, the Textile Technology Translation module integrates cutting-edge industry trends (e.g., smart textiles, sustainable materials) through bilingual analysis of international journal articles and white papers, cultivating students' ability to decode and articulate technological innovations in English.

3.1.2 Language Adaptation Skills in Cross-Cultural Contexts

The cultural differences of countries along the "Belt and Road" have led to significant differences in language habits. For example, the Middle East market pays attention to the etiquette of business communication, the Southeast Asian market prefers figurative product descriptions, and the European market emphasises the precision of technical parameters. The course needs to train students' ability to adjust their language strategies according to different cultural backgrounds through situational simulation and case comparison. For example, in the module of "costume Culture Translation", the cross-cultural communication cases of Chinese Hanfu, Indian sari "drape technique (draping technique)" and Turkish national costume "Ottoman motifs" are selected to analyse the semantic conversion strategies in different cultural contexts, so as to enable students to master the translation strategies such as "Combination of direct translation and meaning" and "Elaboration of culturally loaded words". Cultural loaded word interpretation and other translation skills to avoid communication barriers caused by language and cultural differences.

3.1.3 Multimodal language output ability

Adapting to the communication characteristics of the digital era, the course needs to cultivate students' language application ability in multimodal media scenarios. For example, in the module of "Translation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Techniques", students are required to make bilingual short video commentaries for traditional techniques such as Su embroidery and batik, and they need to make comprehensive use of colloquial expressions, visual texts (such as the English visual presentation of "stitch density" and "colour gradation") and cross-cultural narrative skills to translate static text into a language that combines linguistic accuracy and cultural differences. This will transform static textual translation into multimodal output with both linguistic accuracy and cultural impact. This kind of ability cultivation not only meets the trend of media change in international communication, but also meets the practical needs of textile enterprises in cross-border e-commerce live broadcasting and the construction of overseas brand official websites.

3.2 Professional Cognition Goal: Deep Expansion from Knowledge Acquisition to Industry Value Construction

The goal of professional cognition focuses on the cross empowerment of "Language + Apparel", aiming at helping students to establish a global vision of the textile industry, industrial chain cognition and grasp of cutting-edge trends through the professional penetration of the English course, and to form a proactive awareness of "language tools serving professional development".

3.2.1 Cognition of global textile industry pattern

The course helps students understand the division of labour and collaboration patterns of the global textile industry chain by introducing reports on the textile industry of countries along the "Belt and Road" (e.g. Southeast Asian textile manufacturing clusters, Central Asian wool industry belt, and the ecology of European high-end fashion brands). For example, in the "Textile Technology Translation" module, the differences in the English expressions of "digital textile factories" in China and "high-end customized workshops" in Italy are compared and analysed, leading students to think about the language communication strategies under different industrial positioning. At the same time, in combination with RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) and WTO textile trade rules, we explain technical barriers in international trade (such as OEKO-TEX environmental protection certification) and tariff terms (such as "duty-free quota"), so as to enable students to grasp the international rules of the industry's operation in the course of language learning.

3.2.2 Integration of cutting-edge knowledge in the Apparel field

The three core segments of the apparel field (design, technology and trade) are deeply integrated with English teaching:

Design field: introduce international fashion week show reviews and English interviews with designers, analyse the cross-cultural dissemination of design concepts such as "minimalism" and

“deconstruction”, and cultivate students’ ability to explain design ideas in English;

Technology: Combining the application of “Industry 4.0” in the textile industry, explaining the English expressions of technical terms such as “computer-aided design (CAD)” and “rapid prototyping”, and interpreting research papers on nano antimicrobial fabrics and biodegradable fibres in international journals;

Trade: simulate cross-border e-commerce negotiation scenarios, train practical English such as “product description”, “customer complaint handling”, etc., and integrate risk prevention and control in international trade (such as “force majeure” clause), intellectual property patent”, etc. intellectual property patent”) and other professional knowledge.

3.2.3 Cognition of Modern Transformation of Textile Cultural Heritage

Aiming at the demand for cultural intercommunication in the “Belt and Road” initiative, the course places special emphasis on the construction of professional cognition of Chinese costume cultural heritage. Through interpreting the English research literature on “Silk Road” costume heritage and analyzing cases of international communication of Chinese costumes (e.g. overseas activities of Chinese costume Day and cultural expression of Chinese designer brands in international fashion weeks), the course guides students to understand the path of modern design transformation of traditional costume elements (e.g. horse-face costume and tie-dyeing techniques). For example, in the module of “Translation and Interpretation of Non-Heritage Techniques”, students are required to compare the international costume industry’s interpretation of “Qing Hua Porcelain Patterns” and “Miao Silver Jewellery”, and write a cultural interpretation text in English that combines both academic rigour and communication affinity, so as to establish a professional recognition of the contemporary value of traditional textile culture in language training.

3.3 Cultural Communication Goal: From Cross-cultural Understanding to Active Export of Chinese costume Culture

In the context of “One Belt, One Road”, costume is not only a commodity, but also a carrier of cultural symbols. The course takes “cultural communicator” as its cultivation orientation, and is committed to realizing the goal of upgrading from “cross-cultural understanding” to “active output of culture”, which consists of three levels of progression:

3.3.1 In-depth Understanding of Multiple costume Cultures

Through comparing the cultural characteristics of the costumes of the countries along the “Belt and Road” (such as the cultural connotation of “abaya” in Arabian costumes and the symbolic significance of “sarafan” in Russian national costumes), we cultivate students’ cultural sensitivity and interpretation ability. The course sets up a topic on “Comparison of Chinese and Foreign costume Culture”, which requires students to analyse in English the deeper cultural logic of the colour (e.g. the auspicious symbolism of Chinese red vs. the warning meaning of Western red) and form (e.g. the ceremonial function of the Chinese stand-up collar vs. the structured expression of Western suits) of costumes in different cultures, and to form a cognitive framework of “costume as a mirror image of culture”. This ability is a prerequisite for cultural communication – only by understanding the culture of the other can we achieve effective dialogue in communication.

3.3.2 Accurate Translation of Chinese costume Culture

The course focuses on training students’ skills in translating and interpreting culturally loaded words for concepts specific to Chinese costume culture (e.g. the concept of “unity of man and heaven”, the “five elements” colour system, and the “twelve chapter pattern” symbols). For example, “cheongsam” cannot be simply translated as “cheongsam”, but should be combined with the evolution of its history from Manchu flag costume to modern national costume for cultural annotation; “twenty-four seasons costume” needs to be interpreted in the translation of its ecological wisdom of “making with the times”. Through the establishment of the training model of “cultural concept → semantic deconstruction → cross-cultural translation”, students can master the ability of transforming abstract cultural connotations into internationally comprehensible language, and avoid the “loss of meaning” in cultural communication.

3.3.3 International Communication Competence in Textile Culture

The highest level goal is to cultivate students’ ability to actively communicate Chinese textile culture in the international arena. Through the module of “Intercultural costume Project Practice”,

students are organised to participate in real international communication activities: for example, writing bilingual guides for the overseas exhibition halls of Chinese textile enterprises, acting as cultural interpreters for international academic conferences on costumes, and creating cultural story scripts for the overseas social media accounts of "National Tide" brands. In practice, students are required to integrate language skills and professional knowledge to transform non-heritage skills such as "Suzhou embroidery techniques" and "Scopolette dyeing and finishing" into globally appealing communication content, and at the same time understand the "localisation strategy" in international communication (e.g., highlighting the luxurious texture of silk for the Middle East market, and emphasising the concept of sustainability of traditional craftsmanship for the European market). This goal-setting takes the English programme beyond the realm of linguistic tools to become a field of practice in cultural communication.

The trinity of "language proficiency - professional knowledge - cultural communication" is not isolated, but forms a synergistic cultivation mechanism through internal logic. Among them, language proficiency is the basic support, and the deepening of professional knowledge and the realisation of cultural communication depend on precise language tools; professional knowledge is the core carrier, and language teaching is based on the professional content of costumes to avoid "generalised" language training, while the international presentation of professional knowledge feeds the professional enhancement of language proficiency; cultural communication is the sublimation of value, and the students' cross-cultural communication is the key to the development of language proficiency. Cultural communication is the value of sublimation, students in cross-cultural professional communication, through the language medium to achieve cultural dialogue, and ultimately the formation of "use English to tell Chinese textile stories" consciousness and ability. The three elements are interdependent and mutually promoting, and together they build up a talent cultivation goal system that organically unifies "instrumentality, professionalism and humanity".

4. Conclusion

The construction of the trinity course objectives is essentially an active response to the needs of the "Belt and Road" era. It breaks the limitations of traditional university English courses which "focus on language but not on professionalism", "focus on input but not on output", and transforms the industrial characteristics of textile colleges and universities into the core competitiveness of talent cultivation. Through the specialisation of language ability, the internationalisation of professional cognition, and the initiative of cultural dissemination, the course not only provides students with the tools to cope with the international workplace, but also empowers them with the sense of mission to locate Chinese values and disseminate Chinese culture in the global textile industry pattern. Subsequent course design should focus on these three objectives, further refine the teaching content and innovate the teaching mode, so as to ensure that the objectives are effectively implemented and achieved.

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