Practical Research on the Cultivation of Cultural Awareness of Core Literacy for English Normal Students from the Perspective of the Second Classroom

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Abstract: Since the implementation of the Second Classroom Transcript (SCT) in 2018, universities across the country have continuously improved educational path of the second classroom based on their own characteristics, and carried out a joint education model between the first and second classrooms. However, problems such as emphasizing ideological and political education over professional talent cultivation, neglecting the construction of a differentiated second classroom system conformed to talent cultivation goals and disciplinary backgrounds, and failing to concern core literacy cultivation in disciplines, are widely presenting in practice. This is particularly evident for English normal students, for whom current second classroom practices primarily focus on language skills development, overlooking the integration of cultural awareness into the framework. To tackle these problems, this article attempts to construct an innovative practical path for embedding cultural awareness cultivation in the second classroom system, from four sections of ideological growth, social practice, professional skills, and cultural and sports activities, so as to improve English normal students' cultural awareness of core literacy.

Keywords: English Normal Students; The Second Classroom; Core Literacy; Cultivation of Cultural Awareness

1. Introduction

In July 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League and the Ministry of Education jointly issued the *Opinions on Implementing the Second Classroom Transcript in Colleges and Universities*[1] (hereinafter referred to as the *Opinions*), which clearly stated that "focusing on talent cultivation goals, respecting the historical traditions of schools, coordinating the first classroom teaching arrangements, realizing the interaction, integration, complementarity, and mutual promotion between the second and the first classroom", while also mandating the promotion and implementation of SCT regime in colleges and universities nationwide from the autumn semester of 2018. Since then, universities across the country have promoted the construction of a school-based SCT, leveraging the advantages of the second classroom in knowledge application and supplementation, ability enhancement and expansion, improving the practical education system of the second classroom, and implementing a joint education model of the first and second classrooms.

2. Status Quo

Since the implementation of the *Opinions*, universities have built a second classroom record evaluation system guided by the traditional credit system, incorporating SCT into the student ideological and political evaluation system, cultivating a series of the second classroom "golden courses", creating an immersive second classroom education experience center, and enhancing the value of SCT application. However, despite the development of the system, some problems still exist in practice.

Firstly, universities place greater emphasis on ideological and political education, while giving less attention to its professional aspect. Although according to the *Work Guidelines for Deepening the Second Classroom Transcript in Colleges and Universities*[2] (hereinafter referred to as the *Work Guidelines*), universities generally divide the second classroom into seven sections, including ideological growth, innovation and entrepreneurship, social practice, volunteer and

public welfare, work experience, professional skills, and cultural and sports activities, with the intention of balancing the comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor among college students through the second classroom. However, due to the inherent characteristics of the second classroom and the fact that the Youth League Committee is the "main force" in promoting SCT in universities, professional skills activities conducted in the second classroom have been overlooked by numerous universities.

Secondly, in the implementation of the SCT, universities have ignored the talent cultivation objectives of various majors and the background prerequisites of diverse disciplines, resulting in the absence of a second classroom system that distinguishes among professions and aligns with the nurturing of professional talents. As a result, the created second classroom is only regarded as a "a set of students' activities" or "extracurricular activities" beyond the first classroom, and it cannot form a joint force with the first classroom to educate students or serve the professional talent cultivation goals.

Thirdly, the current second classroom in universities has yet to fully concentrate on nurturing students' core competencies. The talent training objectives in for English normal students are aligned with the national educational standards, aiming to develop proficient and competent middle school or high school English teachers. According to the *Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards* (2022 Edition)[3] and the *General High School English Curriculum Standards* (2017 Edition)[4], the essential competencies for English teacher candidates encompass language proficiency, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and learning ability. Among them, in the context of building a robust country of education, to effectively communicate China's narrative on the global stage, a deep understanding of the language and cultural nuances is paramount. However, the second classroom offered by universities for English normal students only emphasizes the cultivation of language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and interpreting, without paying attention to the cultivation of cultural awareness.

Therefore, based on the above issues, this article endeavors to delve into the second classroom activities aimed at fostering cultural awareness among English education majors, and establish a second classroom system tailored to the future English teachers, with the objective of enhancing students' core competencies especially cultural awareness, and improving the quality of practical education of the second classroom.

3. Literature Review

Searching on CNKI (China National Knowledge Internet) by using the keyword "Second Classroom", as of June 30, 2025, a total of 1,156 articles have been published since 2023, with a significant increase in the first half of 2025, where 396 articles were released. Recent data and analysis from academic institutions indicate a growing trend in the number of articles related to the second classroom, reflecting increased academic interest in this educational domain. However, compared with current research on the second classroom, more research regarding the overall construction of SCT in universities has been conducted, whereas less research on the establishment of second classroom tailored to specific majors or disciplines; More attention has been given to discussing the effectiveness of second classroom education than to strategies aimed at enhancing its practical efficacy; More research on second classroom activities for non-English majors, with less focus on English majors; More emphasis on researching the cultivation of language proficiency within English core literacy, whereas research on the nurturing of cultural awareness remains relatively scant.

As Liu Dingfen (2023) summarized the development of English major's second classroom activities from 2001 to 2022, she enumerated the development trends of ideological and political education, branding, internationalization, networking, and diversification[5]. After conducting a survey on the construction status of the second classroom related to English majors in 30 universities nationwide, Liang Jie et al. (2020) found that nearly 60% of universities have not established an efficient and standardized management mechanism for English second classroom.[6]. Feng Lin (2021) asserted that the main reason affecting the development of the second classroom is individualized differences in

students' self-awareness and language proficiency levels[7]. Wu Tiejun et al. (2019) proposed that in the second classroom, students can construct new language knowledge through "exploratory manner", build an English language system through "cooperative interaction", and nurture English humanities through "instrumental activities". [8]

4. Second Classroom

Generally speaking, the term "second classroom" refers to educational activities pertinent to student development, conducted beyond the confines of traditional classroom teaching (Huang Jiqing, 2025)[9]. This type of educational activity is not simply a student activity oriented towards recreation and entertainment, but rather an educational activity that can make up for the first classroom's limitations of space and time, while also possessing both "ideological and political" and "professional" attributes. Therefore, the second classroom can serve as an extension of the first classroom education and a carrier for talent cultivation and practical education.

According to the *Work Guidelines*, when designing the second classroom, universities ought to emphasize strengthening political awareness, fostering ideological development, promoting cultural and sporting events, engaging in volunteer public welfare activities, nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship, facilitating practical internships and training, as well as enhancing skill and specialty cultivation. The project system should also focus on professional talent cultivation goals and coordinate the design of the second classroom system with the first classroom teaching arrangement. Therefore, the second classroom system in general universities covers seven sections, as mentioned before. Some universities in order to highlight the attributes of "ideological and political" and "professional", further stipulate compulsory and elective sections in the seven sections, to highlight the function of ideological and political education and professional talent cultivation.

5. Core Literacy And Culturual Awareness

Core literacy embodies the educational essence of the curriculum, encompassing the correct values, fundamental qualities, and crucial abilities that students acquire through curriculum learning, enabling them to meet their lifelong personal and social development needs. The core literacy that English courses aim to cultivate in students include language proficiency, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. Among them, cultural awareness reflects the value orientation of core literacy.

The standards of compulsory education and high school English curriculum emphasize the significance of cultural awareness, which comprises not only the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures but also the development of cross-cultural communication skills and a global perspective. It manifests as cross-cultural cognition, attitudes, and behavioral orientations displayed by students within the globalized context. The cultivation of cultural awareness helps students enhance their national identity and patriotism, strengthen their cultural confidence, establish a sense of a community with a shared future for mankind, learn how to be a person and do things, and grow into individuals with civilized literacy and a sense of social responsibility.

Cultural awareness cultivation has a coupling relationship with the daily ideological and political education for English normal students. On one hand, cultural awareness fosters the humanistic literacy among English normal students, sharpens their sensitivity, and facilitates the enhancement of their cross-cultural communication abilities; On the other hand, integrating cultural awareness cultivation into the second classroom system can potentiate the overall educational experience, and promote the political, ideological, theoretical, and cultural identifications of English normal students towards the socialism with Chinese characteristics and excellent traditional Chinese culture.

6. Practical Path

6.1 The Second Classroom Sections Correlate With Cultural Awareness Cultivation

Although the second classroom system encompasses seven sections, four of them are identified as particularly pivotal in fostering students' cultural awareness, i.e. ideological growth, social practice, professional skills, and

cultural and sports activities. The relevant sections and educational objectives are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Second Classroom Modules Correlate to Cultivate Cultural Awareness

Section	Scope of Content	Educational Object
Ideological growth	Thematic learning on ideological and political education, conducted in form of Youth League activities, "Young Marxist Training Project", Scientists and Educators on Campus, Party day activities, party classes, etc.	**Ideological and political education.** Understand the Party's innovative theories, practice the socialist core values, and achieve political, ideological, and theoretical identification.
Social practice	Participate in social practices such as "Returning to Hometown" "Culture, Science and Technology, and Health" and "Double Reduction" , as individuals or teams; Participate in professional practices such as support education in remote and rural areas, labor education, and Three Educational Practices.	**Practical education.** In practice, apply the core literacy of "language+culture+education" to exercise personal English professional skills and accumulate personal cultural literacy.
Professional skills	Participate in profession and skill competitions such as the National College English Competition, the CCTV Cup Practical English Speaking Competition, the LASCAT Translation Competition and teaching competition; Participate in "English+" activities such as English corner, English original classic reading club, and English version of ideological and political literature reading.	**Professional education.** Emphasize the cultivation of personal professional skills and enhance English core literacy, including language proficiency and cultural awareness through daily accumulation and competition driven practice.
Culture & Sports Activities	Participate in cultural and humanistic literacy campus cultural activities such as the international language and culture festival, intangible cultural heritage inheritance station, traditional folk handicraft experience workshop, children's literature workshop, etc.	**Cultural education.** Immerse the personal feelings and cultivate emotions in the high-quality campus cultural atmosphere, and enhance cultural identity and confidence.

6.2 The Second Classroom System Embedded With Cultural Awareness

To foster the core literacy and cultural awareness among English education students, drawing upon the unique features of the four sections above, cultural elements are incorporated across theoretical, practical, professional, and cultural dimensions. Thus a "culture+" second classroom system forms, as showing in Figure 1, allowing students to experience cultural awareness in a tangible, sensory, and effective way, and enhance their cultural identification.

In the second classroom's ideological growth activities, through "Young Marxist Training Project" "Scientists and Educators on Campus" and etc., "youth language" are employed to elucidate the Party's innovative theories, socialist core values, and other ideological and political education content to college students, thereby strengthening their political, ideological, and theoretical identifications, within the realm of cultural awareness.

In the second classroom social practice activities, students are organized to step out of the "confined classroom within campus" and into the "expansive classroom of society" to carry out social practice, community practice, Three Educational Practices (i.e. educational observation, educational internship and educational research) and others; observe the prevalent conditions of community governance across the nation; integrate personal development into the process contributing to social and national development, while reinforcing students' political and cultural identification within the realm of cultural awareness.

In the second classroom professional skills activities, students are encouraged to engage in profession and skill competitions, such as the National College English Competition, the LASCAT Translation Competition and teaching competition; participate into the "English+" activites, such as English corners, sessions focused on reading English originals and classics and English versions of ideological

and political literature. These activites aim at bolstering students' cultural identification within the realm of cultural awareness.

In the second classroom cultural and sports activities, by organizing international language

and culture festivals, intangible cultural heritage stations, ethnic minority cultural centers, cultural visits, museum tours and etc., students' cultural identification and awareness are enhanced.
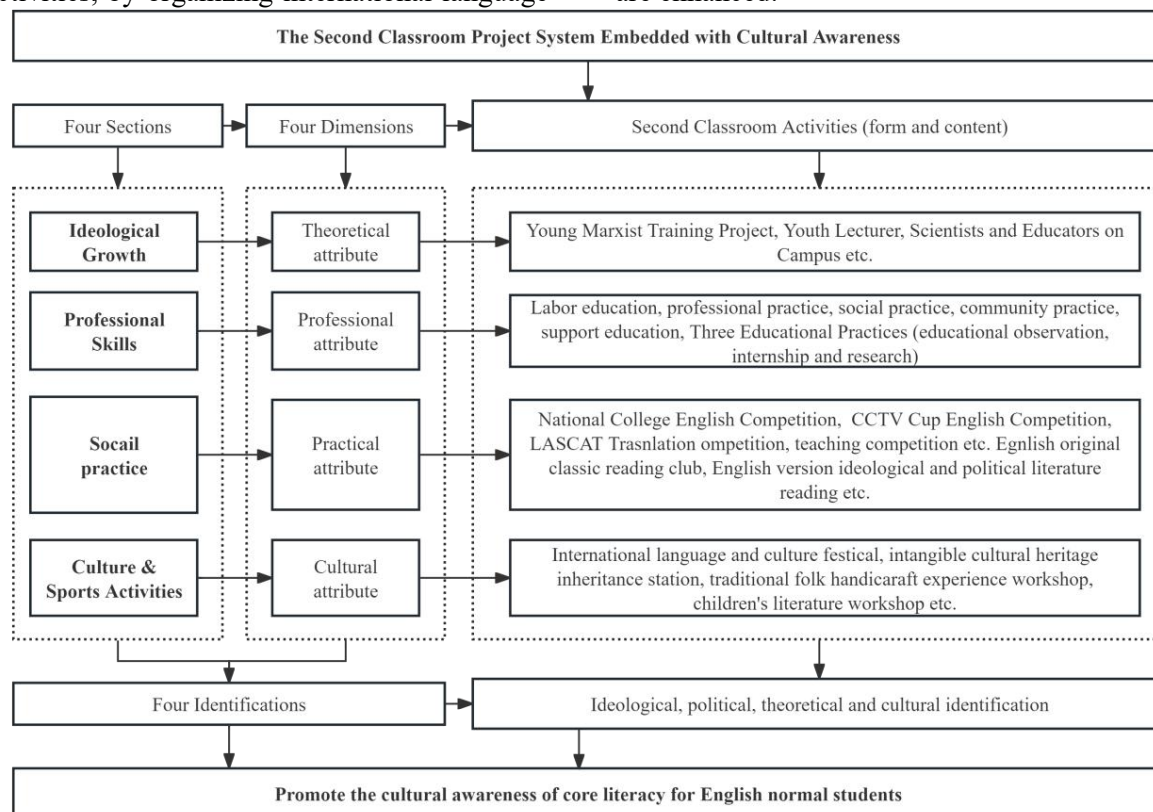

Figure 1. Innovative Practical Path of the Second Classroom System Embedded with Cultural Awareness Cultivation

7. Conclusion

The implementation of a second classroom system designed to foster cultural awareness among English education majors in universities, precipitates a seamless integration btween the first and second classroom. This initiative aims to synergize the cultivation of core literacy, cultural awareness, and ideological-political education, which ultimately enhances the second classroom's role in supporting professional talent development and upgrading educational quality.

Acknowledgments

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