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# **Integrating Chinese Traditional Culture into Rural Primary School English Teaching: a Multimodal Approach**

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**Abstract:** Language is the carrier of culture, and culture can be inherited and developed through language. Chinese traditional culture has profound cultural details and important educational value. Therefore, promoting the integration of Chinese traditional culture into English teaching has become a necessary trend of educational development. The combination of Chinese traditional culture education and English teaching can not only improve students' second language learning, but also deepen their understanding of traditional culture and evoke their love for national culture. However, there is a certain lack of traditional culture education in primary school English teaching, especially in rural areas. In order to solve the phenomenon of "Chinese Cultural Aphasia" and better help students understand and learn traditional culture, teachers can realize the effective penetration of the elements of Chinese traditional culture in rural primary school English teaching based on the multimodal perspective, thus further implementing the educational concept of cultural education.

**Keywords:** multimodality, Chinese traditional culture, rural primary school, English teaching, cultural awareness

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## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, China has been paying more and more attention to the importance of Chinese traditional culture in English teaching. English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) points out that "Teachers should guide students to conduct comparative analysis of Chinese and foreign cultures in the process of learning English, broaden their international horizons, deepen their understanding of Chinese culture, and enhance their sense of Chinese cultural identity".

However, there are still many problems in traditional culture education in rural primary schools, especially the following outstanding problems: single teaching content, backward teaching concepts, rigid teaching modes as well as insufficient intrinsic motivation, which seriously constrain the improvement of the level of traditional culture education. According to the survey, the English teaching materials of rural elementary school generally lack the content of Chinese traditional culture, and the applied teaching content is too single, which is difficult to stimulate learning interest. Teachers do not value the importance of teaching traditional culture, and often follow the textbooks, failing to guide students to deepen their understanding of Chinese culture. China's exam-oriented education system has led to the fact that English teaching at this stage focuses too much on grammar and vocabulary learning, which makes the class boring and lowers students' learning efficiency. In addition, due to the poor material conditions, it is difficult for them to have access to knowledge outside the classroom, so students naturally pay less attention to traditional Chinese culture and lack the awareness of learning it actively.

In order to solve such problems, the teaching strategy of integrating traditional culture into English in rural primary school is constructed under the multimodal perspective, that is, starting from teaching materials, supplement multimodal teaching resources; starting from teachers, learn advanced teaching concepts consciously; starting from the classroom, create cultural context through multimodal interaction. The organic integration of traditional culture and English class not only opens up a new learning path for students to improve their comprehensive language application ability, but also enhances cultural identity, cultivates dialectical consciousness and intercultural communication ability, and provides an important reference for educational innovation.

## 2. Problems in English Teaching in Rural Primary Schools

### 2.1 Single Teaching Content, Lack of Learning Interest

In the traditional primary school English teaching, the teaching content is too single, which is difficult to stimulate students' interest in learning. For primary school students who have just come into contact with foreign language learning, a lively and colorful classroom atmosphere is more conducive to helping them generate internal driving forces, thus bringing positive effects. In addition, for the study of English language knowledge, English textbooks are the most important way to acquire knowledge. However, most of the English textbooks in primary school lack the content of Chinese traditional culture, which leads to the phenomenon of "Chinese cultural aphasia". The English teaching materials currently used in primary school in China have less content related to traditional culture. Therefore, teachers generally do not attach importance to the foreign language teaching of Chinese traditional culture, and often neglect to use English as a communication tool to introduce traditional culture to students, not to mention the teaching of localized English expressions, which is not conducive to the cultivation of the students' sense of cultural identity.

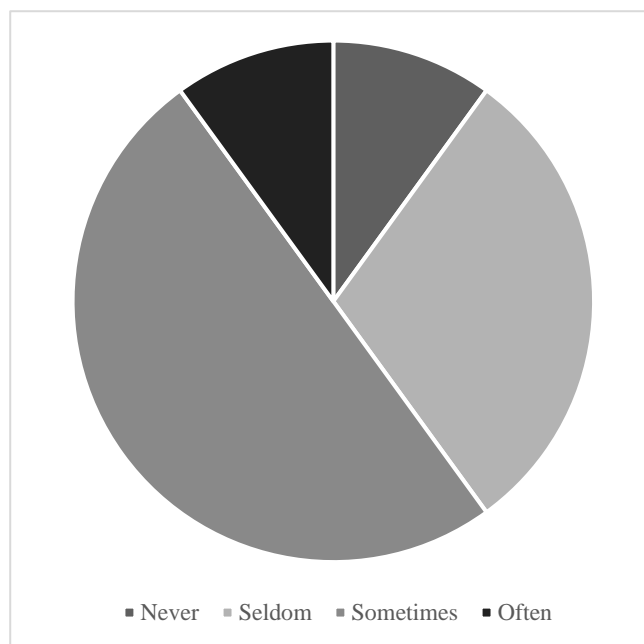
**Table 1.** The Proportion of Culture in Oxford Shanghai Primary School English Textbooks

Culture Origin	Culture Content	Proportion
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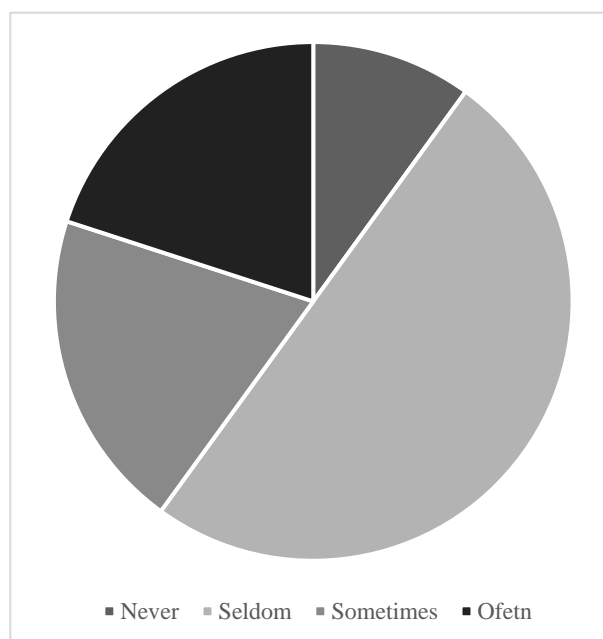
Chinese Traditional Culture	Chinese traditional festivals, food, tea, paper cuttings...	24%
Culture of English-speaking countries	Western festivals, food, fork, knife, greeting way...	76%

### 2.2 Outdated Teaching Concept, Blocked Penetration Channel

Teachers are not only the practitioners of teaching, but also the propagandists of Chinese traditional culture. Rural teachers usually prepare and teach lessons based on textbooks, which basically includes cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries. Therefore, teachers are more inclined to explain Western culture and together with insufficient excavation and expansion of the textbooks, thus it can be seen that teachers do not pay much attention to Chinese traditional culture. Under the background of exam-oriented education, teachers more focus on the improvement of scores, so most of them overemphasize the teaching of English language knowledge, and seldom consider integrating Chinese local culture into teaching, leading to the lack of traditional cultural education soil and the cut-off of students' cultural awareness training channels. Furthermore, the teaching concept of English teachers in rural schools is relatively backward, and the learning of traditional culture is not deep enough as well as the understanding is not thorough enough. Therefore, it is difficult for them to help students fully understand Chinese traditional culture and promote the reverse output of traditional culture. According to the results of the survey (see Figures 1 and 2 below), only 20% of the teachers often integrated Chinese traditional culture in class, and 90% of the teachers thought that there are few opportunities to express Chinese traditional culture in English, so they seldom considered incorporating traditional culture into the teaching content, which turned English teaching into complete teaching of linguistic knowledge, and constrained the integration of the traditional culture.



**Figure 1.** The Opportunity for Teachers to Express Traditional Chinese Culture in English



**Figure 2.** How often teachers integrate traditional culture into English lessons

### 2.3 Insufficient Intrinsic Motivation and Lack of Cultural Awareness

Due to the backwardness of the region, rural students have little understanding of the outside world, and mainly obtain information through the class, while the knowledge of traditional culture taught in class is very little, so they know little about our country's traditional culture, and naturally pay less attention to the local culture. The statistics of the questionnaire survey show that 70% of the students expressed that they were not very interested in traditional culture, and only 30% of them said they were very interested about it. When students were asked whether it was necessary to learn traditional culture in English class, 40% of them had an indifferent attitude, 10% thought that learning traditional culture was unnecessary, 35% consider it necessary, and only 15% argued that learning this part was very important. As a matter of fact, many students have the will to learn Chinese culture, and some of them even like our traditional culture very much, but they often give up the study of it because the content is not always taught in class, and it is too difficult for them to learn on their own. The lack of intrinsic motivation makes it a serious constraint on the cultivation of cultural awareness, and is not conducive to the rural students' knowledge and understanding of traditional culture.

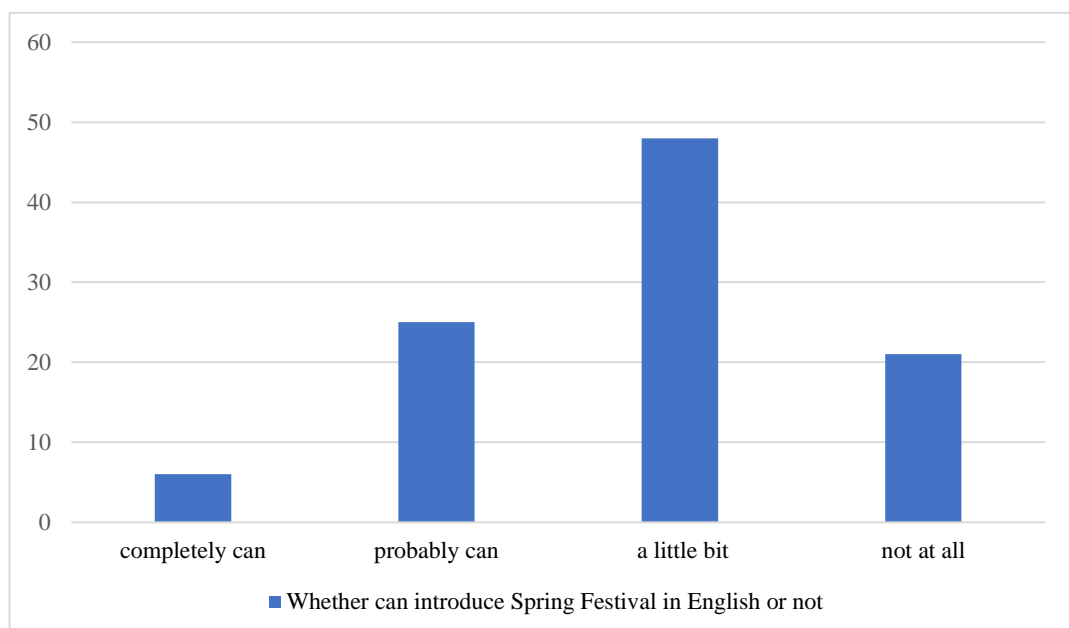
**Table 2.** The Overall Cognition of Rural Primary School Students to Traditional Culture

Interest in Chinese Traditional Culture		Is it necessary to learn traditional culture in English classes	
Very interested	30%	Strongly necessary	15%
Slightly interested	50%	necessary	35%
Not interested	20%	Doesn't matter	40%
		Not necessary	10%

## 2.4 Rigid Teaching Mode and Low- efficiency of Classroom Teaching

Because of the backward teaching environment, insufficient teachers, poor teaching equipment and shortage of educational funds in rural primary schools, students do not have access to foreign teachers' courses, and teachers cannot use multimedia to implement innovative teaching modes such as "heuristic teaching" and "flipped classroom". Consequently, teachers can only adopt the teaching methods of "cramming education" to instill repeated, single and boring vocabulary and grammar teaching into students; students can only mechanically listen to teachers' lectures and passively learn the contents of textbooks. The whole classroom teaching is lack of vitality, so students' attention is unfocused and classroom efficiency is low, additionally, students seldom have the opportunity to output their own knowledge. On the other hand, teachers do not realize the importance of innovative teaching methods. They only pursue the completion of teaching tasks without considering students' class experience and absorption. In the long run, students will lose interest in learning English, and

develop a sense of language anxiety, which will in turn affect the effectiveness of teaching. Regarding the origin of the Spring Festival, we investigated many pupils in rural areas. Surprisingly, most of them did not know about it, only about 10% knew it completely, only 6% of them could introduce the Spring Festival in English, and less than 30% of the teachers would explain the traditional culture frequently. It can be seen that even if students have been exposed to traditional culture in their daily English learning, the expected learning effect cannot be achieved, which shows that the integration of traditional culture in rural elementary school is obviously insufficient. Chinese traditional culture is designed to be very extensive, and the Spring Festival is the most familiar to students. However, very few students understand the origin of this festival, and even fewer will introduce it in English, which shows that traditional culture education in English teaching is still lacking, the integration effect is not ideal, as well as the teaching effect is generally low.



**Figure 3.** Whether Can Introduce Spring Festival in English or not

### 3. The Strategy of Integrating Traditional Culture Education with English Teaching

In order to promote the innovation and development of English teaching in rural primary schools and change the traditional classroom and inherent teaching mode, this paper uses multimodal teaching methods to mobilize students' senses in an all-round way, creates a vivid English classroom, and prompts students to actively participate in the classroom. Multimodal teaching is an innovative teaching mode introduced from the West, which has recognized at home and abroad. Based on context, communication and cognition, this teaching mode advocates teachers to use words, icon, sound, body and other modalities to effectively link students' vision, hearing, touch, smell and other senses, to strengthen the direct correlation between students and knowledge, and form interaction with the external environment, so as to deepen knowledge understanding and enhance vocabulary memory in the process of learning Chinese traditional culture, promoting students to actively construct knowledge system. The following will be guided by the current English teaching, and put forward the implementation strategy for the practice of promoting the integration of traditional culture into multimodal English teaching in rural primary schools.

#### 3.1 Starting from Teaching Materials, Supplement Multimodal Teaching Resources

The primary task of promoting the integration of Chinese traditional culture and rural primary school English classroom is to expand materials, use modern multimedia technology, supplement multimodal teaching resources, and provide teaching situations and convenient conditions for foreign language teaching through multi-sensory linkage, multi-material integration, and multi-angle perception, with integrating local culture into English teaching, laying a cultural foundation, combining theory with practice, innovating teaching methods, and improving students' language accomplishment.

Take Unit 11 Chinese festivals of the fifth grade of primary school English in Oxford Shanghai edition as an example. There's a situation--"On Chinese New Year 's Eve, families have a big dinner together. They often eat fish and dumplings.", so we can expand the meaning of eating fish and dumplings on New Year's Eve, ask students "What else do you eat on the New Year 's Eve?", which leads to other food such as "rice cake--achieving new heights in the coming year; spring rolls--Spring is in the air; dumplings-reunion". Use the question "Do you want to know more about the Chinese traditional food in China?" as the introduction topic, through playing food videos, displaying food pictures, playing audio and guessing words, etc., mobilize students' hearing and vision, and explain Chinese food culture in a simple way, for example, many Chinese dishes are named according to history, legends and celebrities, such as "lion's head meatball", "banquet at Hongmen", "Dongpo meat", and the interaction between multiple modes is used to create a good English learning atmosphere for students. The penetration of traditional culture in foreign language learning plays a role in cultural enlightenment, awakening cognition and understanding cultural implication for primary school students.

#### 3.2 Starting from teachers, learn advanced teaching concepts consciously

Teachers should take the initiative to learn advanced teaching methods, explore new teaching models, choose reasonable modal types, and master multimodal design skills. Teachers need to design feasible teaching tasks according to the teaching objectives, based on the teaching materials, constantly excavate the potential cultural content in the teaching materials, understand the advantages of each mode, and select and use the modal elements such as text, sound, image, color, video and body in a targeted manner, so that multimodality can effectively promote the traditional culture into the primary school English classroom. Teachers should actively improve teaching methods according to the actual situation, enrich classroom activities, realize the mutual promotion of teaching and research, improve their own teaching and research ability and teaching literacy, and also provide sufficient guarantee for the smooth progress of multimodal collaborative English teaching.

Take Unit 11 Chinese festivals of the fifth grade of primary school English in Oxford Shanghai edition as an example. In order to consolidate the text learning and deepen the impression of knowledge, teachers can dig the text to let students answer, and use multimodal teaching to guide students to complete the training, “On Chinese New Year’s Eve, we together. We eat \_\_\_\_\_. At the Spring Festival, we often \_\_\_\_\_. We \_\_\_\_\_ at night.” Teachers can provide pictures of family dinners, short videos of dumplings, and audios of fireworks, so as to prompt students to help them answer questions more quickly and correctly, build a real and vivid language environment, and promote students to master English knowledge and skills with the help of senses. According to the content of the text, the teacher designs relevant dialogues to organize students to discuss in groups and perform situational dialogues on the stage. This teaching link reviews the text again, which is conducive to training students' oral expression ability and innovation ability.

### Teaching Design

#### **Step 1: Pre-reading: Lead in**

1. Enjoy a video to lead in the topic.

T: What is it about?

S1: It's about Chinese festivals.

2. Ask and answer about the Spring Festival.

T: Great! But among all the Chinese festivals, which one is the most important in China?

S2: It's the Spring Festival.

T: I agree with you. We also call it Chinese New Year. So what do you usually do during the Spring Festival?

S3: Buy new clothes.

S4: Clean the house.

S5: Visit relatives and friends.

S6: Set off firecrackers.

Ss: ...

T: Very good. (Learn the new word: firecracker with the pictures)

3. Listen and say (see picture on the right)

Read and fill in the blanks. (Students read the whole text quickly and try to complete the blanks according to the pictures)



On Chinese New Year's Eve, we \_\_\_ together. We eat \_\_\_\_. At the Spring Festival, we often \_\_\_\_\_. We \_\_\_\_\_ at night.

T: All of you are excellent! Who can tell me, what is the meaning of eating fish and dumplings during the New Year?

S1: Fish means abundance.

S2: Eating dumplings will bring us money.

T: You are right. What else do you eat on the New Year's Eve and what does it mean?

S3: I like niangao! It means a higher income or a higher position.

S4: My family usually eat tangyuan on that day, because it symbolizes family reunion.

T: Do you want to know more about Spring Festival?

S: Yes!

T: Let's learn the origin of this festival. Let's read the story of Nian.

**Step 2: While-reading: Story- learning**

1. Read Part 1 & 2 and underline the answers to the questions in pairs.

(Students read Part 1 & 2 carefully in pairs and try to underline the answers to the questions.)

Students try to understand the details of the story by answering the questions.)

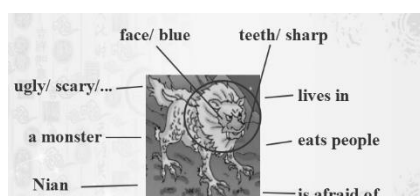
Q: Where does Nian live?

What does Nian do at the end of every year?

What is Nian afraid of?

2. Look and say.

(Students describe Nian completely with the help of the picture and key words.)



3. Read Part 3 & 4 and find the answers to the questions in groups.

(Students read Part 3 & 4 carefully in groups and try to find the answers to the questions.)

Students try to understand what happened by answering the questions.)

Q: When does the story happen?

What does Nian do on that day?



4. Read the story aloud and try to retell it according to the pictures.

### **Step 3: Post-Reading: Extended reading**

Book reading: students read the story about the Mid-autumn Festival---- "Chang'e Flees to the Moon" with the reading strategies they learnt in class. Then try to finish the questions.

Q: How many suns were there in the sky before Hou Yi saved people?

Who came down to Earth and gave Hou Yi an elixir of immortality?

Why did Chang'e fly to the moon?

### **Step 4: Summary**

T: Chinese festivals are traditional and famous not only in China but also abroad. There are many interesting stories about them. The stories can help stimulate our interest of reading, and help us know more about the festivals. So, children, please enjoy the fun of reading, enjoy Chinese festivals and love our own colorful cultures.

### **Step 5: Homework**

1. Read the story of the Chinese festival you like.

2. Make up the mind map of the story.

## 3.3 Starting from the classroom, Create Cultural Context through Multimodal Interaction

Traditional English teaching has always had the disadvantage of emphasizing input and neglecting output. Teachers blindly instill language knowledge into students and ignore that students are the main body in the teaching process. The emergence of multimodal mode has greatly improved the richness of teaching content and the interaction of classroom teaching - starting from hearing, creating a language environment to improve the ability of expression; from the perspective of vision, flexible use of diversified teaching methods; starting from the sense of touch, guide students to learn interactively; multi-sensory linkage, immersive learning traditional culture. Guided by the cultivation of students' subject literacy and cultural awareness, through the interaction and transformation of high-frequency modes, situational teaching is combined with traditional culture to create an open, inclusive and interactive learning atmosphere for students, which is more conducive to promoting students' understanding of traditional culture. Through the development of diversified classroom activities, students can try to learn independently and explore cooperatively, integrate static materials and dynamic resources, help the cultivation of cultural thinking, stimulate students' interest in learning, and improve classroom participation. By implementing multimodal classroom evaluation methods, broadening feedback channels, combining communicative discussion with teacher-student interaction evaluation, optimizing the teaching evaluation system, and realizing the integration of teaching evaluation and learning.

Text modality is the most intuitive symbol. It helps students understand the meaning and context of words by stimulating visual senses. In the learning process, teachers can use easy-to-understand words to show students the development process and significance of traditional culture with high frequency. Video modalities such as English short videos and film and television drama clips, as well as audio modules such as English songs, speeches, story readings, and classic dialogues, can also be used as import modules to stimulate students'

hearing and vision. Complementarity between modal symbols can further deepen the memory of vocabulary pronunciation, promote the understanding of the context in which vocabulary is located, and increase the understanding of Chinese traditional cultural history and customs. At the same time, it exercises students' English listening and improves their multimodal communicative competence. In addition, teachers should give full play to the role of scaffolding and guide students to carry out situational communication activities. Take Unit 11 Chinese festivals of the fifth grade of primary school English in Oxford Shanghai edition as an example, teachers can broadcast an audio of firecrackers on the Spring Festival first, so that students can guess what the festival is, and then design the game link of "You draw and I guess". The teacher chooses five well-known Chinese traditional festivals, invites two groups of students to perform with language symbols such as limbs and facial expressions, and lets the remaining students guess the name of the festival. The group with the largest number of guesses wins. This kind of classroom form not only greatly improves students' learning enthusiasm and classroom learning efficiency, but also directly and effectively helps students to develop cultural awareness.

Cultural awareness focuses on the comparative awareness of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, so teachers can lay the foundation for the cultivation of cultural awareness by interpreting the teaching materials. For instance, in Unit 1 "Food for Thought" of the Foreign Studies Edition, the theme is "Man and Society" and "Man and Self." Food serves as a means of introducing healthy lifestyles and dietary customs in various nations, emphasizing tolerance, communication, and different cultures. The article is a first-person narrative that details the eating preferences of each family member in a mixed-race family as well as their various points of view about culture shock.

The opening of the article points out the cultural background and introduces the diversified food cultures; the second to fourth paragraphs tell the main character "I" about the typical food of China and Britain in a light-hearted and humorous tone, and at the same time write about parents' views on the food of non-motherland; the fifth paragraph embodies the culture shock of stinky tofu and the change of "my" attitudes through an unforgettable eating experience; the last paragraph ends with the sentence "One man's meat is another man's poison" to conclude, expressing the author's thoughts on multiculturalism and her attitude of tolerance and respect. The intermingling of the two food cultures of the mixed-race boy's family is actually a collision of Chinese and Western cultures. Through reading this article, students can understand that different experiences and experiences will lead to the formation of different views and learn to treat multiculturalism with a tolerant heart and an open mind to the cultural differences.

#### **4. Conclusion**

*English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* points out that the cultivation of cultural awareness is conducive to students' enhancement of national feelings and the sense of community of human destiny, self-cultivation of character, improvement of civilization and social responsibility. The study of Chinese traditional culture is the foundation of cultivating students' cultural awareness and enhancing cultural self-confidence. Therefore,

this paper proposes a multimodal teaching mode to integrate traditional culture into rural primary school English teaching, fully tap the traditional cultural elements of textbooks, and design a multimodal teaching plan based on this to find the best entry point for cultural integration. According to the language foundation and actual teaching situation of rural students, reasonable classroom activities are designed to construct an effective multimodal teaching mode for rural primary school English teaching, enrich teaching content, innovate teaching methods, increase teaching interaction, and improve teaching quality. Promote the high-quality development of English teaching in rural primary schools, and truly achieve the goal of teaching and learning.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflict of interest:** The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

#### **Acknowledgments:**

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Professor Weng Yulin, whose professional quality, patient instructions and encouragement have provided me with great help and confidence in writing my thesis.

Secondly, I would express the depth of my gratitude to all the teachers who taught me. By teaching me professional knowledge, they helped me to improve my professional qualities and writing skills, which has become the premise and basis for me to successfully finish this dissertation.

Last but not least, I am extremely grateful to my parents and friends for their deep understanding, steadfast concern and unconditional love, which gives me a break from my research.

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