

# Strategies of Cultivating Students' Cultural Ability in Colleges and Universities English Teaching

LiJuan Zhang

Inner Mongolia University of Finance and Economics, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, 010070, China

**Keywords:** Colleges and universities; English teaching; Cultural ability; Cultivate strategy

**Abstract:** Language and culture are inseparable, and there is an inextricable relationship between the two. Language is the carrier of culture, culture is the foundation of language, and the two complement each other. English teaching is an important component of colleges and universities teaching, and it plays an indispensable role in improving students' knowledge structure and cultivating comprehensive literacy. When teaching English, teachers in colleges and universities should not only pay attention to the teaching of English as a language, but also pay attention to the cultivation of students' cultural ability in this subject. Through the teaching of English in colleges and universities, deepening students' cultural understanding of Western countries and use of English ability. This paper analyzes the current situation of colleges and universities English teaching, clarifies the significance of cultivating students' cultural ability, and proposes relevant strategies for relevant educators reference.

## 1. Introduction

Under the background of the continuous integration of international culture, the cultural value of colleges and universities English teaching has become more and more obvious. Liu Runqing, the professor from Beijing Foreign Studies University proposed that English education also shoulders the mission of knowledgeable and elegant education, whose purpose is to cultivate people with broad knowledge and elegant temperament<sup>[1]</sup>. However, in the present, there are still some problems in colleges and universities English teaching. Teachers are only satisfied with instilling books knowledge into students, and not telling students the cultural knowledge and background they contain. Nowadays, with the development of the increasingly competitive market, talents with only professional knowledge are hard to stand out, and those who can show their knowledge are more favored. In order to cultivate the talents needed by the society, colleges and universities should focus on and strengthen the cultural cultivation in English teaching, so as to enhance students' comprehensive ability.

## 2. Analysis of the current teaching situation in institutions of higher learning

Colleges and universities have long been affected by the examination-oriented education, and focusing more on results, ignoring the cultural factors in English teaching. The policy of colleges and universities has a great influence on teachers. Because they lack cross-cultural awareness and concepts, and teachers wouldn't pay attention to the cultural factors in English teaching. Teachers lack systematic training of cross-cultural theoretical knowledge, and they are not familiar with the cultural factors in English teaching. They can't implement and cultivate the cultural ability of students in the teaching process. Teachers' neglect of the role and function of culture leads to many omissions of cultural common sense in the teaching process. For example, there are great differences in greetings between China and the West. Chinese people like to ask "Have you eaten?" This is a way of chatting. But in the eyes of Westerners, it means that the other party is inviting themselves. The misunderstanding of dialogues caused by this cultural difference will leave Westerners with the impression that the Chinese are not keeping their promises. Therefore, the teaching of cultural background is very important in colleges and universities English.

Many English teachers focus on the output of language knowledge in classroom teaching, and they spend a lot of time explaining words and grammar in class<sup>[2]</sup>. To a certain extent, this is

influenced by the examination-oriented education. Teachers regard teaching as a task, gradually losing the enthusiasm for teaching in the process, and blindly chasing the teaching results. They hardly spend time on activities where teaching results are not obvious, such as organizing students to read English literary works, explaining Western cultural knowledge, and differences between Chinese and Western languages and cultures. This has resulted in insufficient training of cultural awareness and competence. Teachers usually train students' English competence in the following ways: translation teaching, cognitive teaching, listening and speaking teaching.

English teaching in colleges and universities in China lacks English learning and training at the cultural level. Many students have a lot of English knowledge in their spare time. However, there are many problems in oral English and interpersonal communication. Even though some students are good at oral English, their lack of understanding of Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds can lead to many ironic mistakes in their dialogue with people. At the same time, students' learning objectives are not clear, which will lead to students' lack of motivation in learning English. Students still use mechanical memory in learning English, lacking understanding and attention to cultural differences. Boredom learning can make students feel tired of learning, lose interest in English learning, and greatly reduce the efficiency of learning.

### **3. Significance of cultivating cultural ability in colleges and universities**

#### **(1) Adapting to the development of the society**

There is a clear stipulation in college English teaching requirements that college English teaching should cultivate students' awareness and ability of intercultural communication through language, which is also the ultimate goal of English learning. With the development of society and the strengthening of cultural integration, people's development is limited only by learning their own culture<sup>[3]</sup>. As one of the most widely used languages in the world, English has an extremely important position and role in international communication. In terms of business, the exchanges between Chinese enterprises and foreign companies are increasing, and the study of Western culture is conducive to the further development of Chinese business. The blending of culture is also reflected in many aspects. Under the trend of integration of knowledge economy, cross-cultural exchange activities are increasing and covering various cultural aspects, such as film and television, music, entertainment, literature and art. Therefore, college English should better adapt to the changes of the times, and change the traditional English teaching mode of attaching importance to knowledge and ability into a teaching mode focusing on cultural introduction, paying attention to the cultivation of students' English ability and strengthening students' cultural awareness.

#### **(2) Satisfying the internal requirements for language development**

Language and culture are inseparable, and it is meaningless to leave the language of culture. When learning a language, you should also understand the culture behind the language. Otherwise, it is easy to make jokes during the learning process. The development of language is accomplished in constant additions and modifications, and it changes with the change in culture. The application of language has its specific context and social meaning. Blind use of language will result in only knowing the literal meaning but not understand the cultural background. Language and culture complement each other, and language is mutually restrained and reinforced. Learning the culture of English is helpful for the development of English, and the language is constantly improving in use. Western culture also has an impact on Chinese language. The two languages co-exist and there is a translation relationship between the two. The current Chinese English is a necessary stage in the process of language development, and it is a way for language to improve itself. If the importance of culture is neglected in colleges and universities English teaching, language is separated from culture. Such language is meaningless. What students learn is only the form of language rather than its connotation. In addition, there are also non-verbal means and non-verbal behavior in the process of language communication. If we lack the understanding of the culture behind them, we will have communication barriers and cultural aphasia in the process of communication. Therefore, the cultivation of cultural competence is very important, which not only meets the inherent needs of language development, but also improves the quality of language communication.

#### 4. Strategies of cultivating cultural ability in colleges and universities

##### (1) Improving the humanistic quality of English teachers

For teachers, it is a great challenge to integrate culture into college English teaching, which is a higher requirement for teachers. Teachers should not only master professional knowledge, but also have a certain knowledge of linguistics, literature and other disciplines, and be more familiar with Western culture. In the process of teaching, teachers can combine words and phrases with the cultural background behind them, and make a comparative analysis with Chinese so that students can better understand and master English knowledge<sup>[5]</sup>. The ability of colleges and universities English teachers is an important factor affecting the cultivation of students' cultural ability. Therefore, colleges and universities need to improve the humanistic quality of English teachers and their cultural accomplishment through training and lectures. Colleges and universities can also employ some foreign teachers or professionals with relevant experience to communicate with teachers, in order to improve teachers' understanding of cultural differences between China and the West. If conditions permit, teachers should actively strive for relevant opportunities to study abroad, which is different from what they feel through other people's reports. This kind of real experience can improve the persuasion of teaching and arouse students' interest in learning.

For example, teachers in Unit 1 Famous Universities, Volume 2 of College Experience English, published by Higher Education Press, can also hold all-English seminars on the traditions and functions of Chinese and Western universities in addition to the knowledge points of the texts. Students' enthusiasm for participation will certainly be very high, so that students can communicate in groups and prove their views through the cultural phenomena around them.

The whole process is open. The teacher only raises this topic, and gives the class to the students. There is no standard answer, which not only enhances the students' language ability, but also improves the students' cultural knowledge. In this process, teachers play the role of supervising and correcting. They give pointers to students' wrong opinions. Without a certain cultural reserve, teachers are unable to control the entire discussion.

##### (2) Using information teaching effectively

In the modern society with the continuous development of information technology, English teaching in colleges and universities should also be of the times. The constant updating of teaching mode and the use of information equipment make teaching more vivid and enable students to show a more intuitive and vivid situation. Zuo Huanqi, the professor from East China Normal University pointed out that multimedia has its unique features in creating social and cultural scenes. It can create vivid scenes in combination with teaching content, and make students feel immersed in the situation. Some multimedia can also interact with students, especially in helping them learn social and cultural knowledge<sup>[6]</sup>. The use of information equipment can improve students' understanding of English culture and give them the independence to integrate into the English culture of colleges and universities.

For example, in Harvard University, teachers can let students collect and organize information about the history, cultural characteristics and advanced cultural concepts of world-renowned universities by using information equipment, so that students can be more intuitively influenced by Western culture.

##### (3) Carrying out rich extracurricular cultural activities

###### 1) Performing creative culture

Taking the word "quixotic" as an example, which comes from the novel Don Quixotic. Teachers can let students read the novel by themselves in English, and let students cooperate in groups through their own understanding and perform in the form of sitcom<sup>[7]</sup>. The word "quixotic" is meant to describe impracticality and the pursuit of excessive idealization. In the performance process, it is easier and more profound for the student to understand the meaning of the word by combining the personality characteristics of the novel. Introducing the cultural background of English learning into teaching can better help students understand and memorize the meaning of English words and sentences, as well as cultivating students' cultural ability.

###### 2) Appreciating English songs and movies

Teachers can play some English songs that are not very long in the listening class, and cross out important words, and students can listen to the songs to supplement the words, which not only stimulates the students' interest in learning, but also strengthens the students' listening training<sup>[8]</sup>. At the same time, teachers can also recommend some interesting English movies to students, so that students can feel the characteristics of Western culture in the process of watching movies, and thus cultivating cultural ability.

## 5. Conclusion:

In summary, combined with the current situation of colleges and universities English teaching, teachers can not separate culture from teaching. Colleges and universities should cultivate students' cultural ability by improving teachers' humanistic quality, effectively utilizing informationized teaching and carrying out rich and colorful extracurricular cultural activities. Students must learn not only English knowledge but also the importance and methods of cultivating cultural ability.

## Reference:

- [1] Zhu Mingyan. 2019. Metaphor Similarity and the Cultivation of Students' Thinking Ability Based on the Teaching of Basic English in Newly-built Undergraduate Colleges and Universities [J]. Vocational Technology, 18 (03): 56-59.
- [2] Liu Yanmei. 2019. Cultivation of Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence in College English Teaching under the Social Media Environment [J]. Shaanxi Education (Higher Education), (03): 13-14.
- [3] Shen Qi. 2019. Strategic Analysis of Cultivating Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence in College English Teaching [J]. Overseas English, (02): 198-199.
- [4] He Zhilan. 2019. A Probe into the Methods of Cultivating Students' Critical Thinking Ability in College English Teaching [J]. Journal of Kaifeng Institute of Education, 39(01): 63-64.
- [5] Ma Xiaoli. 2019. A Study on the Cultivation of Cross-cultural Ability in College English Teaching in the New Era [J]. Journal of Jiamusi Vocational College, (01): 215+217.
- [6] Zhang Linlin. 2018. Research on the Cultivation of Intercultural Competence in College English Teaching in the New Era [J]. Journal of Hubei Open Vocational College, 31 (24): 149-150.
- [7] Wang Jing. 2018. Strategies for Cultivating Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence in College English Teaching [J]. Curriculum Education Research, (49): 95-96.
- [8] Ma Bingjun. 2018. Strategies for Cultivating Students' Cultural Competence in College English Teaching [J]. Journal of Jishou University (Social Science Edition), 39 (S1): 208-210.