

A Study on Integrating Tujia Culture in English Teaching Materials of Local Universities

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Abstract. Promoting and protecting the national culture of minority nationality is a major issue that must be faced in the English teaching of universities, especially in the universities located in the minority areas in the globalization world. This article takes Tujia Minority as an example to discuss Tujia culture in English teaching materials of local universities in the area of Tujia-Miao Autonomous Prefecture. It suggests that increasing Tujia culture in the English teaching materials, designing it from simple to difficult, evaluating, revising, improving, and making full use of it, are the strategies for integrating Tujia culture in English teaching materials of local universities.

1. Introduction

The committee of Implementing the Inheritance and Development of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture pointed out that culture is the blood of the nation and the spiritual home of the people. The unique concept, wisdom, temperament and charm of Chinese culture add the self-confidence and pride of the Chinese people. At present, some scholars in China have the necessity of integrating Chinese excellent traditional culture into foreign language teaching. By investigating the status of Chinese students' excellent traditional culture education, Chen et al. (2016) believe that strengthening the excellent traditional Chinese culture of college students should be the strategic task in the process of education [1]. However, the cultural knowledge of English students in Chinese university is still not enough. Their ability to use the language they learn to spread and promote the excellent culture of the Chinese nation in cross-cultural communication activities is also unsatisfactory (Xiao et al.) [2]. Many studies have proposed the necessity of cultural integration in English classroom teaching, which provides a powerful value for the content and methods of teaching Chinese excellent traditional culture in English teaching in the university. However, few highlight its integration in the English teaching materials of universities for nationalities, not further discussing the development of minority culture in English teaching materials. The Tujia people is a long-established minority in the large family of the Chinese nation, living in the Wuling Mountains adjacent to Hunan, Hubei, and Chongqing, and claims to be "Bizka" (the meaning of the local people). This article takes Tujia minority as an example to discuss English teaching materials of local universities, mainly Jishou University and Hubei Minzu University, which are located in the area of Tujia-Miao Autonomous Prefecture.

2. The importance of Tujia culture in English teaching materials of local universities

In today's globalization world, various cultures are intertwined. Shu pointed out that English teaching in the university should cultivate students' ability to introduce Chinese culture in English (2013) [3]. It is very necessary to integrate Tujia culture in the English teaching materials of local universities.

First, it is conducive to the dissemination of Tujia culture. The Tujia people are hard-working and intelligent, with Tujia language, Tujia national epic Tima, Tujia clothing, Baishou dances, Nuo opera, Diaojiao house, and so on. The construction of college English curriculum system in local universities should focus on the development of English curriculum resources that are conducive to

the promotion of ethnic culture, with the unique geographical and resource advantages of local universities for nationalities (Qin, 2018) [4]. Such Tujia culture in the English teaching materials of local universities can help English majors demonstrate the splendid culture of the Tujia People to China and even to the world, and promote the dissemination and inheritance of Tujia culture from generation to generation.

What's more, it promotes local economic and social development. The characteristics of economic, tourism and culture provide a new opportunity for the development of higher education in Tujia- Miao Autonomous Prefecture, to teach Tujia culture in English teaching materials of local universities. For example, while students know about Tujia clothing tapestry but not necessarily understand their unique artistic charm, Xilankapu, a special local type of brocade, can be displayed in the form of words or illustrations. Thus, teachers can make full use of the medium of English teaching materials and guide students to analyze Tujia art characteristics. Knowing the value of Tujia costumes, student can understand this unique Tujia brocade all over the world. These invisible Tujia cultural resources in the teaching materials must play a very important role in promoting the local tourism and economic development.

Third, it is helpful to promote the level of English learning. Language learning is not only the mastery of pure language but also the study of language culture and language communication through the integration of various cultures in the world. If some Tujia cultures are introduced in English teaching materials, students can be more interested in English learning, speak English actively, and thus better integrate into English class teaching. The development of Tujia culture in the English teaching materials in local universities do not only improve the level of English learning, but also promote students' international communication awareness and ability.

Finally, it can enhance students' national identity. In the globalization world, simply accepting "global culture" will inevitably have an impact on local culture and the values of the nation. Many students over-respect western culture, ignoring the study of their own culture. Through the research on the recognition of Chinese outstanding traditional culture among contemporary college students in more than 10 universities in China, it is found that contemporary college students have a lack of overall knowledge of Chinese excellent traditional culture (Cheng & Xiong, 2016) [5]. With the strong impact of the increasingly diversified culture, Tujia culture has gradually become marginalized. Numerous folk customs and cultural spirits are also disappearing. Under this circumstance, the reconstruction of national traditional culture is particularly important. The integration of Tujia culture in English teaching materials of local universities can enable students to understand Tujia people more clearly, deepen their understanding of Tujia culture and create a sense of national identity, thus forming a correct attitude towards life and world.

3. Strategies for integrating Tujia culture in English teaching materials of local universities

3.1 Increase the content of Tujia culture in English teaching materials

In the course of designing English teaching materials, the proportion of ethnic traditional culture can be greatly increased. At present, teaching materials for English majors and non-English majors in China are planned basically the same all over the country. However, the proportion of Chinese traditional culture in English teaching materials is generally not high, and there are fewer teaching materials with local characteristics. The Guidelines for Improving Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture and Education pointed out that one of the outstanding problems of Chinese excellent traditional culture and education at the moment is that "the curriculum and teaching materials system needs to be improved." The local teachers, schools and government can discuss about how to put Tujia culture in English teaching materials for local universities. In the selection of materials, some rich, interesting and close to student life materials with local cultural characteristics can be added, such as Tujia Jinji poetry, Xilankapu, Girls' day, Cry Wedding song, and so on. Specifically, when the text of English teaching materials is concerned with "festival", English teachers can introduce the historical origin of Tujia Nuo opera, so that students can know more about Tujia minority. While learning English, students can deeply understand the Tujia culture and enhance national awareness

and identity. In the course of designing English teaching materials in local universities, it is a very effective and feasible method to increase the proportion of Tujia culture.

3.2 Design the gradient of Tujia culture in teaching materials

In English teaching materials for local universities, Tujia culture cannot be simply added, but need to be designed in different level. Specifically, according to the rules of English teaching and the level of student learning, we can conduct the overall design, select the suitable one from Tujia culture for the students of local universities, do the in-depth research and form a gradient from simple to complex, from easy to difficult order for students in different grades. The low grades can be provided with the relatively simple and close to the topic of daily life “Tujia Culture”, such as local food, traditional festivals, architecture, etc. The senior grades can be given the wonderful English translations of Tujia classic literary and artistic works, such as epics, folk songs, and novels. At the same time, it is also possible to enrich teaching resources of Tujia culture through text illustrations, after-school exercises, examples, scenes, and so on. Most of the English teaching materials, used by students of English majors in colleges and universities, absorb the latest foreign language materials, including all aspects of modern life and has distinctive characteristics of the times, and playing a very important role in English teaching in universities throughout the country. However, due to the low level of English majors in local universities, designers or teachers can supplement their own teaching materials with lower level and local recourses, in order to achieve the individualized and nationalized teaching. Thus, students will better improve their English language.

3.3 Make full use of teaching materials integrated with Tujia culture

Teachers can choose some strategies to maximize the intrinsic value of teaching materials. Du believes that the dialogue, classic reading, imitation and practice are the basic methods for contemporary Chinese teachers to teach the traditional excellent culture (2015) [6]. These methods can be also used in the integration of Tujia culture in English teaching materials for local universities, such as dialogue between Tujia and British people, reading Tujia classics in English, singing Tujia folk songs in English, imitating social activities on the Girl’s Day. At the same time, according to the student’s learning characteristics in Tujia-Miao Autonomous Prefecture, teachers can apply certain strategies, such as increasing, decreasing, adjustment and changing strategies to choose the most suitable learning materials for students. In addition, English teachers can also communicate with the teachers in other universities across the country through websites, micro blogs, WeChat, and QQ to enrich teaching resources. The rational use of teaching materials is necessary, especially when penetrating the Tujia culture in English teaching. Thus, students can be promoted from traditions, beliefs, concepts and others from teaching materials.

3.4 Improve the evaluation method of teaching materials

All teaching materials need to be improved and continuously evaluated in the teaching process. Cunningsworth (1984) emphasized the evaluation of the cultural knowledge of teaching materials and proposed a system for it, including whether the presentation of cultural information is specific and whether the cultural content is appropriate [7]. In teaching practice, publishers, experts, teachers and students can conduct case studies to assess the efficiency of teaching materials on a micro, dynamic and in-depth basis, evaluating whether teaching materials meet the goals of English teaching in local universities, whether it meets the needs of Tujia teachers and students and whether it effectively improves the students’ English level. Only in this way can we use English teaching materials of local universities efficiently.

4. Conclusion

Promoting the excellent traditional culture of China, protecting the national culture of minorities and inheriting the rich culture are major issues that need to be faced in English teaching in universities, especially in local universities in minority areas. Today, in the globalization world, the integrating of

Tujia culture in the English teaching materials of local universities in Tujia-Miao Autonomous Prefecture provides a new direction for the improvement and development of English textbooks. While making full use of the intrinsic value of English teaching materials, students can improve their English level and cross-culture communicative ability, cultural self-confidence, national identity and patriotism, and better adapt to the needs of economic and social development in China. Of course, the research on local culture embodied in the English teaching materials can expand the scope to more universities in minority areas in China, but not limited to Tujia-Miao Autonomous Prefecture. Thus, it will better realize the systematization of the research not only on Tujia Culture but also on Chinese excellent traditional culture in English teaching materials.

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