

Study on the Construction of Mother Tongue Cultural Identity in Intercultural Communication

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Abstract—The learning and cultivation of mother tongue culture is the basis for construction of mother tongue cultural identity. Language is the carrier and basic form of culture. Achieving cultural consciousness and proper use of negative language transfer can help to build students' mother tongue cultural identity and help students establish an equal and tolerant cultural attitude in intercultural communication, cultivate students' ability to respect, appreciate, and treat different cultures equally, strengthen national cultural confidence, and cultivate students' patriotism.

Keywords: *mother tongue culture, identity, intercultural communication*

I. INTRODUCTION

The process of language learning is also a process of cultural penetration. As the most widely used language in the world, English has an obvious international status. Therefore in order to better integrate with international standards, it is required by Chinese law that English learning should be started as a compulsory course in the third grade of primary school. Impacted by the big context, Chinese students with Chinese as the mother tongue make efforts to learn English and English culture, the western culture led by the USA. But they overlook an important issue: to integrate into the world. They should not only learn the language and culture of the other country, but also learn well their mother tongue culture. Only in this way can they effectively output mother tongue culture and get the world better understand China, because improving cultural soft power is also a way to increase the influence of a country. In the process of intercultural communication, cultural input and output are equally important. Only with a good mother tongue cultural identity can we communicate confidently and equally in intercultural communication. At present, affected by the strong English culture, many students have clouding of consciousness of their cultural identity. The main reason is that they do not know much about Chinese traditional culture. Chinese culture is vast and profound, with a long history. Only by deeply studying and understanding Chinese outstanding traditional culture can learners have a sense of belonging and national pride and understand that all Chinese people are in the same vein and have the same language and cultural identity.

II. CULTURAL IDENTITY AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

As Zhang Yijun (2016) maintained, in the trend of global cultural diversification and localization, equal international communication requires that Chinese people should not only have considerable knowledge of English culture, but also have the ability to spread local culture in English. Intercultural communication is not only an exchange of language, but also a collision of cultural identities. A person's way of thinking and values are gradually established in the process of language and culture learning. Growing up in context of mother tongue culture, people may think that they understand their culture and culture is silently affecting their behavior, especially by the influence of implicit culture unconsciously. In the process of learning foreign languages, Chinese people's values may be challenged. If the mother tongue cultural identity is not deepened into their mind enough, they are very likely to blindly accept the invasion of foreign cultures.

A. Cultural identity

Identity is a very important but multi-dimensional concept in new cultural geography. Identity originates from the Latin "Identita" which originally refers to "self-identity" and is a collection of difference and identity. Intercultural communication scholar Fong defines cultural identity more specifically: cultural identity is a social construction, a communicative identity that enjoys a common system of linguistic signs and nonverbal behaviors meaningful to members of a group. There is a sense of belonging among the members, and a common tradition, history, language, and a decent set of codes of conduct. He emphasized that cultural identity is a social construction and a sense of belonging to a group that shares a common culture, because the nature of identity lies in the identity of individual's self-concept and self-image, and this identity is based on the identity of others. As said by William B. Gudykunst (April, 2014), cultural identity refers to a sense of emotional belonging to the culture to which one is attached. People who belong to different cultures are eager to get respect for their own culture in the process of communication. But, the proper way to establish respecting and understanding cultural identity varies from culture to culture. Jenlink & Townes believe that

identity is the about identification of different cultural groups and how individuals are identified. Linguist Littlewood pointed out that when we adopt a new mode of speech, to a certain extent, it means that we abandon the original cultural identity and accept another cultural cognitive style; different cultures determine different values, and different values construct different ways of cultural cognition. In intercultural communication, the cultural identity of mother tongue is inevitably challenged in the process of learning foreign languages.

B. Status quo of mother tongue cultural identity

At present, there are two main attitudes towards cultural identity in the process of intercultural communication teaching: the first is abandoning one's specific cultural identity and fully leaning towards the target language culture. Affected by the strong culture of English, coupled with the inadequate understanding of the mother tongue culture at a young age, Chinese people are easy to ignore the cultural identity of mother tongue, and lean on the English culture both ideologically and in action. As a result, in intercultural communication, they are mainly dominated by the western culture and think from the perspective of western culture. The second is adhering to the cultural identity of mother tongue and resisting the target language culture. With respect to adhering to mother tongue culture, many people have misunderstandings. They believe that adhering to the mother tongue culture means not learning western languages, not celebrating foreign festivals, not watching Hollywood movies, rejecting all things of the West. This narrow positioning of mother tongue culture is extremely wrong. A strong and confident culture is well inclusive rather than exclusive, and able to survive from various cultural shocks and maintain alive and vibrant. At the same time, the target language culture is also a mirror which helps Chinese people to re-examine our mother tongue culture from different angles, constantly modify our knowledge of the mother tongue culture, and rationally think and stand on an objective angle to judge rather than blindly follow suit in the face of some intercultural communication events. Traditional culture is the root of mother tongue culture. Learners' identification with traditional cultural identity plays an important role in guiding their value orientation and critical thinking. Cao Guihua (2019) once said, good mother tongue culture learning and identity can increase learners' ability to discern and appreciate culture and help them avoid blind absorption in the face of strong western culture in intercultural communication. When students are willing to take the initiative to learn the mother tongue culture, it is an identity with the mother tongue culture.

III. REALIZING CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS (INTROSPECTION) TO CONSTRUCT MOTHER TONGUE CULTURAL IDENTITY

Fei Xiaotong (1997) maintained that "cultural consciousness" means that people who live in a certain culture have certain knowledge of the culture and fully understand its formation, development process, and trends.

Zhang Youyi (2017 *Guangming Daily*) held that cultural consciousness is the self-awareness, self-reflection, and rational review of culture. It means that the subjects living in a certain cultural and historical circle should have certain knowledge of their culture, both the strengths and weaknesses, and also understand and know about the culture and well handle the relation between local culture and foreign culture.

A. Self-awareness of culture

Self-awareness of culture refers to a full understanding of one's own culture. Chinese culture is vast and profound, with a long history of 5000 years. An in-depth understanding of Chinese culture cannot be got overnight. The study of mother tongue culture is the beginning of self-identity. Where a person or nation comes from, his growth trajectory, development history, and suffering can all be found in the process of learning mother tongue culture, in order to acquire psychologically resonated and empathy identity. Advocating the learning of mother tongue culture should start with the baby, promoting Chinese learning, guiding and cultivating children in Chinese learning from an early age, and advocating the study of excellent traditional culture. The study of mother tongue culture should not stay on the explicit traditional festivals, but also should be deeply explored in combination with the historical humanities to guide students to explore the historical and cultural factors behind traditional festivals, so as to extend the value of traditional culture to the development of today's society, consider the difference between those cultural events from historical and current points of view. The purpose is to let students know the culture and its development course, guide them to inherit and develop the culture, correctly understand the traditional value of the nation and cultivate good codes of conduct in life. Having good mother tongue cultural competence can subtly affect the performance of a person in intercultural communication. Individuals who identify with and take pride in the mother tongue culture are more willing to output mother tongue culture in the process of intercultural communication.

B. Self-reflection of culture

Self-reflection of culture is the ability that a person has to judge his/her own culture. To realize cultural consciousness, we must first learn the mother tongue culture deeply, correctly understand the mother tongue culture, and face the collision of two different roots of cultures in the process of intercultural communication. It is also a process of reflecting on one's own culture. There is no good or bad culture. But in the long history, due to the development of society and the historical environment that people are in, people's understanding of the world and people has certain limitations. Some decaying feudal ideas still affect a small number of people. So, in making an in-depth study of the mother tongue culture, it is needed to make trade-offs, learn outstanding traditional culture and positively carry forward Chinese culture in intercultural communication. In the face of the invasion of foreign cultures and the challenge of values, we

must get rid of the error of "bringism" and absorb the excellent western culture!

C. Realization of cultural consciousness

The realization of cultural consciousness is also a process of cultural identity construction. Gagne & Dick pointed out as early as 1983 that, with the increase in learner experience, teaching events tend to be provided more often by the learners themselves, rather than by external subjects. Today's world is an open and multicultural world. On the premise of fully understanding our own culture, Chinese people should also master the basic elements of other cultures. Various cultures collide with each other in intercultural communication. Having a correct understanding of different cultures helps cultural exchanges, correctly grasping the confrontation, learning from each other's strengths, and building a new order having common recognition and coexisting with different cultures in a harmonious way. In order to achieve cultural consciousness, we must first have cultural confidence, overcome the judgment method based on western culture, and be neither proud nor arrogant but be courteous, polite, objective and fair in intercultural communication to contribute to the integration and development of human culture.

IV. REALIZING NEGATIVE TRANSFER OF MOTHER TONGUE CULTURE TO CONSTRUCT MOTHER TONGUE CULTURAL IDENTITY

Transfer is broadly defined as "the impact of one kind of learning on another". If a kind of learning can promote the other kind of learning, this learning is called positive transfer; if a kind of learning can interfere or restrain the other kind of learning, this learning is called negative transfer. Being able to clarify one's own cultural position in intercultural communication is a gradual and dynamic construction process. In intercultural communication, proper language use helps to establish an effective identity. Conversely, inappropriate language use will lead to the confusion of identity, and even affect the image of a country and nation. Chinese traditional culture is a social and cultural system with patriarchal family as the background and Confucian ethics as the core. It attaches great importance to ethical relations and moral standards. Affected by the traditional patriarchal pedigree relationship of "priority in the old and young, distinction between men and women, and distinction from close and distant" and the ethical and moral concepts, Chinese appellation of relatives is distinguished in great detail. The so-called "difference between the interior and exterior" refers to not only the distinction between families and non-families but also the distinction between relatives; Chinese culture pays much attention to the identity and position of patrilineal relatives; they are called "grandpa (爷爷, father's father)", "grandma (奶奶, father's mother)", "uncle (伯伯, father's elder brother)", "aunt (姑姑, father's sister)"; correspondingly, matrilineal relatives are called "grandpa (姥爷, mother's father)", "grandma (姥姥, mother's mother)", "uncle (舅舅, mother's brother)", "aunt (姨姨, mother's sister)".

In intercultural communication, we can properly use negative transfer of language to accurately express information and things with Chinese characteristics, so as to build our own native cultural identity. An example of introduction of relatives in intercultural communication shown as follows:

这是我舅舅: This is my uncle, who is my mother's brother.

这是我大伯/叔父: This is my uncle, who is my father's elder/younger brother.

In intercultural communication, we may often make supplementary explanation based on direct translation. This is in line with the Chinese way of thinking. Influenced by traditional family culture, 舅舅 (mother's brother) and 叔父 (father's brother) are two completely different appellations. Chinese people have a special feeling for 舅舅; there is even a saying of "mother is the closest person and her brother is the most respectful person". The relation between child and mother is the closest relation. Because mother and her brother are compatriots and the latter is the backing of mother, extending to nowadays, it is also needed to respect mother's brother, as he has the power of discourse in solving family dispute. "大伯" must be father's elder brother and ranks first, while "叔父" is father's other elder brother or younger brother. So when introducing them, you must clearly distinguish them to avoid misunderstanding.

If one can consciously use such a pragmatic transfer strategy in intercultural communication, communicate according to his own cultural habits, use the pragmatic differences between mother tongue and target language, and present other person his own cultural traditions and customs in a timely and appropriate manner, it will be helpful to build an equal communicative status and communicative psychology in intercultural communication, and highlight his mother tongue cultural identity.

V. CONCLUSION

Intercultural communication is not only a language exchange, but also a collision of cultural identities. In the face of the strong English culture, many people are vague about their mother tongue cultural identity, so that they cannot communicate effectively in intercultural communication. Intercultural communication is helpful for people to think about two cultures, continuously strengthen in-depth study of mother tongue culture to realize cultural consciousness, appropriately use negative language transfer in intercultural communication, present the characteristics of mother tongue culture, and build mother tongue cultural identity.

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