

Analysis on Cultivation of Cross-Cultural Communication Competence in College English Teaching

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ABSTRACT

In the new era of diverse and interconnected civilizations, the high-level personnel training and knowledge innovation of higher education make it an important component of national strength and of great significance to the national competitiveness. As important places to cultivate talents, universities and colleges should actively take responsibility to make contributions to the national development. Language is the carrier of culture, so it is necessary for college English educators to involve cross-cultural communication in college English education. This paper tries to analyze the cultivation of cross-cultural communication competence in college English teaching by examining the objectives of foreign language teaching and putting forward some strategies to strengthen cross-cultural communication in college English teaching. It is hoped that some enlightenment for improving college students' cross-cultural communication competence can be provided.

Keywords: *cross-cultural communication competence, college English teaching*

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of globalization and new communication technology, countries all over the world have profound changes in the demand for talents, which puts forward new requirements for the cultivation of international talents. Accelerating the modernization of education and building a high-level personnel training system are the new mission and new challenge of personnel training in higher education. Foreign language teaching in higher education serves the national strategic development. In recent years, the country's demand for talents with global vision, proficiency in foreign languages, and familiarity with international rules have been increasingly growing. Especially under the background of "Belt and Road Initiative", cross-cultural communication competence has become the core quality for Chinese college students to be equipped with, and the cultivation of cross-cultural communication competence has become an essential part of foreign language education and reform.

2. THE OBJECTIVES OF CURRENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Internationally, training high-quality foreign language talents is the main task of higher foreign language education shared by each country. In 1958, the National Defense Education Act of the US first elevated foreign languages to the same level of importance as math and science, followed by several national language development strategic plans in 2004, 2006, and 2011. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published *Languages in a Global World--Learning for Better Cultural Understanding* in 2010. In particular, China's national education conference in 2018 pointed out that international talents with a global perspective, who are familiar with international rules, who are proficient in foreign languages, and who are proficient in sino-foreign negotiation and communication should be cultivated, and specialized technical and management talents who master foreign languages that are in urgent need of "Belt and Road Initiative" and other foreign strategic construction should be specifically trained. Thus, current foreign language teaching should actively serve the national strategic development.

Today's China plays a significant role in the international arena, which puts forward higher requirements for Chinese universities and colleges to train a new generation of compound foreign language talents to adapt to the international situation. At the same time, with the development of modern technology (such as artificial intelligence), foreign language teaching is also facing unprecedented challenges: one is the reform of the teaching method itself; the other is how to ensure that students master the necessary knowledge, competence, and interpersonal skills.

No matter how the foreign language teaching reform and innovation take place, we must focus on the most fundamental goal to train broad-minded and far-sighted young students with love of the Communist Party of China, patriotic feelings, and noble conduct so that they can take on important responsibilities in domestic and international institutions in the future.

3. CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Cross-cultural communication or intercultural communication refers to communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication. The core of cross-cultural communication is to establish and perceive how people from different cultures communicate and also provide guidelines to improve the communication between them. Cross-cultural communication competence or intercultural communication competence involves three levels: knowledge, attitude, and skills.

Knowledge and attitudes can form cross-cultural sensitivity. In cross-cultural communication, the first step is to master relevant cultural knowledge, including the understanding of the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures. People who get involved in cross-cultural communication should also keep an open and inclusive attitude towards foreign cultures. Skills refer to the ability to adopt appropriate ways and adjust communication strategies in cross-cultural communication. There are two criteria for evaluating cross-cultural communication competence: effectiveness and appropriateness.

Youzhong Sun, vice president of Beijing Foreign Studies University, has conducted long-term research on cross-cultural competence. In an article published in 2016, he described the core connotation of cross-cultural competence as follows:

Respect the cultural diversity of the world, and have intercultural empathy and critical cultural awareness; Master basic theoretical knowledge and analytical methods of cross-cultural research; Familiar with the history and current situation of the target country; Understand the basic characteristics and similarities and

differences of Chinese and foreign cultures; Able to interpret and evaluate different cultural phenomena, texts, and artifacts; Able to communicate appropriately and effectively across cultures; Able to help people with different language and cultural backgrounds to carry out effective cross-cultural communication.

According to Youzhong Sun, the basic principles of foreign language classroom teaching guided by the cultivation of cross-cultural communication competence include: critiquing, reflecting, empathizing, and doing.

4. CULTIVATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

4.1. The Current Situation of College English Teaching in China

In order to achieve the objectives of current foreign language teaching in China, facilitating the cultivation of cross-cultural communication competence in college English teaching is of vital importance. However, at present, college English education in China faces some problems. For example, college English teaching tends to pay more attention to the cultures in foreign countries than to the culture in the local country. In most college English classes, knowledge of western history, society, and culture is usually taught without necessary attention to Chinese culture itself. Also, there's a lack of prominence and interpretation of Chinese elements in the curriculum system. Meanwhile, the teaching focus is mostly on instrumental language skills and usage of new words and expressions, and less emphasis is put on the integration of Chinese and foreign cultures and the importance of the transformation of the mode of discourse. What's more, the understanding and accumulation of knowledge are emphasized in the process of foreign language learning while the cultivation of humanistic speculation competence is ignored, and the cultivation of cross-cultural critical reflection ability is not adequate. Although universities and colleges in China have carried out a series of top-down teaching reforms in the field of English education, the traditional teaching mode is still deeply rooted in the ideology of some educators and it is not easy to be replaced in a short time. Throughout the course of English teaching in universities and colleges, it's quite common for some English teachers to focus on the explanation of knowledge while the cultural background that should be emphasized is rarely mentioned, completely ignoring the essential nature of English education.

4.2. Strategies of Cultivation of Cross-cultural Communication Competence in English Teaching

Maybe one of the best ways to solve the above problems is to try to arouse both college English teachers and students' cross-cultural awareness and pay more attention to the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communication competence in the process of college English teaching. The specific strategies are as follows:

First, college English educators should change the traditional concept of English language teaching and integrate excellent Chinese culture into English courses. To know and understand the West and China requires a lot of work at the intellectual and cognitive levels. We live in an era when China is embracing the world. Thus, construction of English courses which involve Chinese thought and philosophy should be carried out so as to broaden and deepen students' cognition and understanding of Chinese culture. Special emphasis should be put on guiding students to deepen the understanding of the experience and wisdom of the Chinese nation, improve their cultural consciousness, and foster their cultural self-confidence so that the students will have the initiative and ability to carry forward Chinese traditional culture, explain Chinese characteristics, and tell China's stories and spread China's voice to the world.

Second, college English education should construct the training mode of cross-cultural communication competence from the theoretical and practical levels, and strengthen the new transformation of discourse mode. In the teaching and study of Chinese cultural classics, "integration" is the core and key point. Harmony in diversity and exchanges and mutual learning between different cultures should be valued throughout the teaching process. Students should not only read and study Chinese and foreign cultural classics, but also should have perspective-taking ability and empathy so as to grasp the essence of Chinese and foreign cultures. At the same time, in college English classes, students should not be confined to knowledge and language skills but do research on the historical and cultural background, lifestyles, customs, and values expressed by art and other forms of the English-speaking countries, which are closely related to the English language itself. What's more, students should be aware of the cultural diversities in different countries in the world and treat these cultures equally and objectively. They also should be guided to recognize and respect different cultures and behaviors and express their own opinions critically so that they can improve their cross-cultural communication ability and critical thinking ability as well. Most importantly, it is necessary for college students to have a firm political stand and in-depth understanding of China's national conditions, and internalize the traditional Chinese culture as its core quality. It is also important for them to have a

sense of patriotism, a broad global perspective, and a long-term historical perspective, to be able to view and examine the situation and issues in the world, and to shoulder the important task of building a harmonious community with a shared future for mankind.

Last but not least, we should optimize an open and interactive internationalized talent training environment relying on international teachers, teaching teams, and cooperation projects to carry out college English education. Hiring foreign teachers is an effective education model, which can create an atmosphere of living in an English cultural environment for students and can let students feel the differences between different cultures under English cross-cultural communication. Foreign teachers have different teaching methods from other college English teachers. Their unique English teaching model can well highlight the value reflected in cross-cultural communication. Also, joint cultivation and international exchange programs between domestic and foreign universities are great ways for students to improve both their English proficiency and cross-cultural communication competence.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, Chinese universities and colleges should take strengthening students' cultural confidence and improving their cross-cultural communication competence as the core concept of college English education, and explore the path of cultivating high-quality foreign language talents through the reconstruction of English curriculum system, the integration of Chinese cultural classics into English education, and the creation of an internationalized English learning environment. College English teaching which involves cross-cultural communication will surely expand students' international vision and knowledge structure, develop their critical thinking, and effectively cultivate their awareness and ability to conduct cross-cultural communication in real situations.

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