



A Study on the Integration of Chinese Culture into College English Teaching

Yuncaï Liu

Guangdong University of Science and Technology

Email: 79861170@qq.com

ABSTRACT. The study attempts to investigate how three English teachers integrate Chinese culture into college English teaching. The findings demonstrate that variations in teachers' commitments and modes of instruction contribute to variations in students' academic performance of Chinese culture because there are not any specific plans or guiding principles about Chinese culture teaching in the process of English teaching practice. Besides, the main factors that affect the implementation of Chinese culture teaching in English classes are the shortage of teaching time and resources. English proficiency test scores of Chinese Culture in Class 3 has greatly improved as T3 successfully utilized blended learning to make up for the lack of teaching time and resources, the post-test scores of Class 1 and Class 2 using traditional teaching have only slightly improved, and there is no obvious difference with the pre-test scores.

keywords: Integration, Chinese Culture, College English Teaching

1 Introduction

According to Adamson [1], language teaching should help students develop an understanding of their own history, culture, and humanities as well as other cultures, and to form ideologies and moral principles using the target language. Through learning about their own culture, learners can develop their own cultural sensitivity and self-confidence, while also encouraging the learning of cultures related to the target language. Comparing the differences between native culture and target culture in language learning can not only improve learners' language proficiency, but also improve their intercultural communication ability [2], as a result, it is crucial to integrate students' own cultural background into English instruction. However, the emphasis of college English teaching in China is mostly on the practical use of English language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the introduction of British and American culture [3]. Consequently, due to the frequent occurrence of Chinese cultural aphasia in China's college English curricula, many Chinese students find it difficult to accurately, efficiently, and equally communicate their traditional culture and national circumstances in cross-cultural interactions [4-7]. Under this background, it has become an imperative part of college English teaching reform to explore how to

integrate Chinese traditional culture into college English teaching and cultivate intercultural communication talents with extensive knowledge.

Since cross-cultural communication is bidirectional, cultural education must incorporate both the native culture and the culture of the target language. If teachers exclusively focus on teaching western cultural knowledge in English classes while ignoring the teaching of Chinese culture, students will not be able to effectively export their own cultures, which will hinder the development of intercultural communication skills [8]. In addition, based on the College English Curriculum Requirements published by the Ministry of Education of China in 2020, it is clearly illustrated that college English teaching should consciously be integrated into Chinese excellent traditional culture, and guide students to correctly view the cultural differences between China and foreign countries, cultivating students' intercultural communication ability. Native language culture is the foundation of cross-cultural communication. Therefore, the study of integrating Chinese culture into English education has become an essential component of English teaching reform in China in order to assist students express Chinese culture in English and develop their intercultural communication abilities. This study attempts to explore how college teachers integrate Chinese culture into daily English teaching by means of mixed research, and the teaching effect achieved, that is, whether students' ability to express Chinese traditional culture in English has been significantly improved.

2 Literature Review

Cong [4] proposed the "aphasia of Chinese culture" in English teaching, arguing that teachers emphasize the introduction of English culture in English teaching, but ignore the teaching of Chinese traditional culture, which makes it difficult for students to express or introduce Chinese culture in English in cross-cultural communication. Subsequently, some researchers conducted empirical researches to explore the causes and strategies of Chinese cultural aphasia [5-7, 9-10]. In recent years, in order to alleviate and eliminate cultural aphasia, more researchers focus on how to integrate Chinese culture into English teaching. Wang [3] studied the integration of Chinese cultural content into college English teaching via using the flipped classroom teaching mode. Besides, Zhang [11] conducted an empirical research on teaching methodology of integrating Chinese culture in college English classrooms. The result showed that the "emergent flipped learning" teaching model can promote students' ability to express Chinese culture in English. However, most researchers only discuss the importance of integrating Chinese culture into college English teaching, and provide some suggestions for its implementation [12-16]. Evidently, empirical research on how to integrate Chinese culture into English teaching is still scant, which needs further practice and exploration. Hence, tests and interviews were used to collect and analyze experimental data in this study, exploring better teaching methods to integrate Chinese culture into college English teaching. It is hoped that the study may provide some practical teaching experience on how to integrate native culture into English teaching, so as to promote the output of native culture in cross-cultural communication.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

The mixed-method approach used in this study aims to address the following two questions:

- 1) Can students' English proficiency of expressing Chinese culture be significantly improved?
- 2) How do teachers integrate Chinese culture into English teaching?

3.2 Research Instruments

In this study, tests and interviews were employed to collect data. The pre-test paper and post-test paper were adapted from the translation topics of National College English Test Band Four (CET-4) organized by the National Education Examinations Authority of China, and the test papers contain the following topics: Chinese traditional festivals, Chinese food, folk stories, folk culture, historical sites, as well as China's political, economic, educational and development. Moreover, in order to address the second research question, the interview explores the factors influencing teachers' integration of Chinese culture in English instruction, with an emphasis on how instructors teach Chinese culture through teaching approaches, teaching material, and activity design.

3.3 Participants

Three non-English major undergraduate classes and the three instructors of the classes from Guangdong University of Science and Technology in China served as the participants for the purposive sample. To preserve three instructors' anonymity, they were given codes (T1, T2, and T3).

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

In order to determine whether the students' ability to convey Chinese culture in English has significantly improved after a semester of instruction, pre-test on students' English knowledge of Chinese culture was implemented in three selected experimental classes at the beginning of the second semester, and the post-test was conducted at the end of the second semester. Then quantitative data were collected and analyzed with Paired Samples T Test by SPSS 25.0. Meanwhile, Three English instructors of the experimental class were interviewed to obtain more information about how they incorporated Chinese cultural knowledge into their English teaching. The researcher transcribed all the information of the interviews into typed manuscripts, which can provide a foundation for in-depth analysis.

4 Findings

4.1 Results of Pre-test and Post-test of Three Experimental Classes

Since integrating Chinese culture into college English teaching has become an indispensable part of college English teaching reform in China, in consequence, for the sake of examining this teaching achievement, three classes were selected to test their differences in English proficiency of conveying Chinese culture. Table 1 showed that the means of post-test of three classes are higher than the pre-test, which means students' capacity to convey Chinese culture in English has increased to some extent after a semester of teaching Chinese culture in English classroom.

Table 1. Paired Sample T Test for Pre-test and Post-test in Three Classes

Class	Variable	N	Mean	T	df	Sig.
Class 1	Pre-test	43	56.33	-1.726	42	.092
	Post-test	43	58.21			
Class 2	Pre-test	42	55.31	-1.926	41	.061
	Post-test	42	57.02			
Class 3	Pre-test	42	55.98	-5.850	41	.000
	Post-test	42	60.98			

However, as shown in Table 1, among the three classes, the Sig (two-tailed) of the pre-test and post-test scores of only Class 3 is .000, lower than .05, while the Sig (two-tailed) of the pre-test and post-test scores of Class 1 and Class 2 are .092 and .061 respectively, both of which are higher than .05. A conclusion could be drawn that, after a semester of English teaching, there is a significant difference in students' scores only in Class 3, in spite of marginal improvement in the other two classes, there is no significant difference. In other words, in the conventional teaching, the teaching effect of Chinese culture infiltrating into English classroom is minimal, the majority of students' proficiency in communicating Chinese culture in English has not significantly increased.

4.2 Results of Interviews

The findings from the interviews revealed the three instructors' understanding on how to teach Chinese culture in English classes. Instructors were asked to explain (1) how frequently they taught Chinese culture explicitly, (2) How much time they spent on teaching Chinese culture, (3) the teaching methods or teaching activities they employed, (4) the factors that influence the penetration of Chinese traditional culture in English teaching.

In regard to questions 1, 2, and 3, T1 and T2 of Class 1 and Class 2 respectively explained sometimes teaching Chinese culture explicitly, only when the theme of the

text involved Chinese culture, would they present the Chinese culture of the related theme in English by means of warming-up activities, discussion and translation practice. Additionally, it is estimated that, in a typical average ninety-minute period, Chinese culture would take between 5 and 10 minutes. In contrast, T3 of the Class 3 reported that he often teaches Chinese culture in college English classes, and blended learning is adopted to teach cultural subjects in English classes. Students were required to complete the assignments regarding Chinese culture before class, including watching English videos about Chinese culture, then presented cultural topics in class in the forms of presentation, discussion, or role-playing. Furthermore, warming-up activities and translation practice were also essential in English teaching, thus, much more time (about 20 minutes in an average ninety-minute period) would be devoted to Chinese culture in Class 3 English teaching.

As for question 4, three teachers argued that the key determining factors are the time constraints and the curricular resources. According to the interview, T3 placed a high value on teaching Chinese culture in English classrooms because he believed that doing so may help students cultivate their sense of self-worth and pride in their country when interacting with people from other cultures. Conversely, the traditional instruction modes used by T1 and T2, such as teaching Chinese culture in accordance with textual topics or translation assignments, they did not take the initiative to increase the teaching of Chinese culture in the English classroom.

5 Discussion

The study revealed that T3 not only spent more time teaching Chinese culture, but he was more flexible and diversified in their teaching mode and teaching activity design than T1 and T2 according to the interviews, hence, only the Class 3 has made significant progress in English proficiency test scores of Chinese Culture. There are several causes for students' English proficiency of expressing Chinese culture to increase, which are commonly classified as internal and external factors. Internal influences may include students' emotions, language basis, psychology, and significance placed on English learning. And the learning environment, the amount of language exercises and etc. are examples of external factors. Based on the results of tests and interviews, it could be found that T1 and T2 simply employed traditional teaching methods that are in line with textbook material, ignoring the significance of teaching Chinese culture. As a consequence, the scores of Class 1 and Class 2 did not significantly improve on the basis of the paired sample T test. On the contrary, T3 placed a high priority on teaching Chinese culture in English classes. To make up for the lack of time allotted during class, T3 fully utilized the blended learning to conduct online and offline teaching, so that students were able to fully engage with the English expression of Chinese culture during their regular study, and their performance has significantly improved. It can be concluded that, blended learning may significantly improve students' academic performance when introducing Chinese culture into English classroom instruction.

The outcomes are in line with Wang's [3] research on utilizing the flipped classroom model to integrate Chinese cultural elements into college English instruction. According to Wang [3], the lack of teaching time and the absence of Chinese cultural

material in textbooks may be most effectively compensated for via having students watch videos about Chinese culture online, which provide students more initiative, flexibility, and autonomy in their learning. The results indicated that the students' articulation of Chinese culture in English was superior to that of students who got traditional instruction, and the majority of students felt that their cultural self-confidence had increased as a consequence. Although translation exercises of some textbooks were designed based on the content of Chinese traditional culture, it is far from meeting the students' output requirements of Chinese traditional culture in cross-cultural communication. While students study about Chinese culture-related topics prior to class in blended English learning, and the learning material is relevant to the topics of the classes, providing the essential foundation for comprehending the cross-cultural communication. Students can learn anytime and anywhere using intuitive and enjoyable online learning materials, their learning passion might be stimulated by knowledge that is fragmented and relevant to their traditional culture. In addition, instructors' attention and assessment both online and offline may encourage students' initiative in learning [17], help them develop autonomous learning ability, all of which can enhance students' academic achievement. Obviously, it is a hidden endless effective cycle.

Zheng [18] presented that it is necessary to transform English instruction from language instruction to language and culture instruction, as well as from the one-way transmission of target language and culture to two-way transmission of target language and native language. Nevertheless, from the interviews, as there is no specific requirement for the integration of Chinese culture into college English teaching in the college English syllabus, instructors either presented Chinese culture in college English teaching based on their time allotment of teaching and the teaching resources at hand, or they explained Chinese culture in accordance with the translation subjects of CET-4. Sometimes, they even disregarded the teaching of Chinese culture due to individual perceptions on Chinese culture, apparently, whether to input more Chinese culture into English class depends on how much teachers attach importance to Chinese culture. Under such circumstances, college English teachers need to have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. They should first recognize how crucial Chinese culture is for cross-cultural communication, and consciously instill Chinese culture knowledge into students during routine instruction to pique their interest in learning Chinese culture [19].

In addition, the position and role of Chinese culture in college English teaching must be repositioned in the course of formulating college English syllabus, so that it can guide teachers' classroom practices correctly. When formulating college English syllabus, teachers need to make clear the curriculum structure, teaching tasks, teaching depth, scope of knowledge and teaching model. To facilitate the integration of Chinese culture into English teaching, it is crucial to clarify the important role and significance of Chinese cultural learning in English teaching.

6 Conclusion

This study describes the classroom practice of three English teachers regarding teaching Chinese culture in college English classes, and examines whether students' English proficiency of expressing Chinese culture have greatly improved through pre-test and post-test. The conclusion is that the amount of teaching time and resources available for teaching Chinese culture in the class are constrained, in the absence of detailed teaching plans and guiding principles, some teachers only implemented translation exercises of Chinese culture according to CET-4 criteria, which makes the Chinese culture teaching practices arbitrary. Under such constrained instruction environment, blended learning provides teachers with richer teaching resources and learning convenience, which can also make up for the shortage of teachers' instructional time in the classroom. Also, the curriculum syllabus of college English course should be improved, and Chinese culture should be emphasized in college English lessons so as to achieve better teaching outcomes.

The potential limitation of this study is that the sample size is not large, and only one semester's data of students' achievement changes are used to illustrate the teaching effect. To obtain more scientific research results, future study should take a bigger sample size into consideration. The findings of this study may provide a reliable teaching practice experience and a reference research direction for eliminating Chinese cultural aphasia in college English teaching.

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