

Practice and Introspection of Cross-cultural Citizenship Education in Chinese English Education

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Abstract: culture and language are closely connected and assist each other language is a part of culture. To master a language, it is required to know the culture. At present, Chinese English education should not just impart language knowledge, but also need to impart English culture. So, cross-cultural education for Chinese citizens is very important. This paper analyzes necessity of cross-cultural citizenship education, sets forth practice of cross-cultural education in Chinese English education, analyzes the problems and comes up with countermeasures.

Key words: English education; cross-cultural awareness; measure

In current world, global integration course becomes faster and faster. English as an official language in the world is an important approach to display oneself to the world. In the 21st century, mastery of English has becomes a basic quality in fierce social competitions and also one of basic standards of measuring talents. Thus, China places English in a very important position. The ultimate aim of English education is to cultivate talents who are able to carry out cross-cultural communication. English education requires that Chinese citizens should not merely master basic language knowledge of English and know of its pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, but also own cross-cultural communication awareness. Therefore, it is very important to implement cross-cultural citizenship education in English education.

I. Implication of cross-cultural citizenship education

To comprehend “cross-cultural awareness”, it is required to first know detailed connotation of “cross-culture”. Generally speaking, cross-culture is to compare differences among different cultures or refers to cultural diversity, such as analysis of cultural differences between Chinese culture and English-speaking countries. So-called “cross-cultural awareness” refers to understanding of human behaviors and

differences in diverse cultural modes ^[1]. Meanwhile, it is required to realize “cross-cultural awareness” and “cross-cultural knowledge” are completely different two concepts. “Cross-cultural knowledge” requires learning and mastery of both Chinese and English, while “cross-cultural awareness” emphasizes sensitivity of English learners to their own culture. It belongs to internal thinking.

II. Significance of cross-cultural citizenship education in English education

1. Cross-cultural citizenship education is a new trend of English teaching

Chinese schools set up English course from 1903. Over the 100 years, English education cultivation objective also has gradually changed in China. Cultivating those able to speak English is no longer the objective. It is required to cultivate talents who can carry out cross-cultural communication in English. UNESCO specifies cultural education contents. Firstly, it is required to admit various cultures have the same position; secondly, it is required to realize modern culture and traditional culture have close relationship. Cultural education contains cross-cultural education. Many countries in the world are faced with cross-cultural phenomena. 2003 English curriculum standard mentioned the concept of “cross-culture” the first time, and brought cultivation of cross-cultural awareness in an important content in the standard. During English education, learners’ “cross-cultural” communication awareness must be valued. So, implementation of cross-cultural education has become a new trend of English teaching ^[2].

2. Significance of stressing cross-cultural education in English education

Current world is a developmental world and information-based world. China starts to play an increasingly important role in the international arena. Meanwhile, China’s communications with other countries in the world become more and more frequent, especially with English-speaking countries. Cross-cultural communication with English-speaking countries has become normal. In cross-cultural communication, if both parties cannot communicate in the sane cultural background, communication barriers will occur. Both parties cannot understand each other and finally fail in communications. English nation and Chinese nation also have common points which can be utilized. However, in most cases, language expression needs certain cultural

background. If one understands English with Chinese use habits, different meanings will be caused ^[3]. Hence, under such international environment of cross-cultural communication, it is required to value cultivation of citizens' cross-cultural communication awareness while cultivating citizens' basic English knowledge and basic skills.

III. Steps of implementing cross-cultural education in English education

1. Cognize cultural diversity

When some citizens begin to learn English, they often could not understand culture of English-speaking countries. Two problems may easily occur during learning: (1) express English according to Chinese expression ways, i.e. apply Chinese culture to understand English culture; (2) set culture. Citizens harbor a simple attitude to learn English culture. For example, Chinese citizens consider “British people are conservative”, “Germans are rigid”, “French people are romantic”. During learning English, previous teaching methods must be changed. Language should be placed in the background of language culture and specific cultural situations. Besides, English education workers should exhibit real teaching materials through multiple ways to make learners know culture of multiple languages. In addition, they should guide learners to develop a correct attitude to cognizing multiple cultures.

2. Respect cultural diversity

After knowing multi-culture, it is required to respect and tolerate cultural diversities. Some citizens stress superiority of Chinese culture to escape from learning English. Or they regard English a burden. It is these narrow thoughts that to some extent restrict their development. Aiming at such situation, English education workers must guide learners and let learners exchange with foreigners in English or view foreign materials through English and know English culture through such way. As Chinese citizens' English level gradually boosts and cross-cultural education has been implemented for many years, it is required to deepen cognition of cultural diversity, treat different cultures on the equal standpoint and tolerate cultural differences ^[4]. When Chinese citizens tolerate diversified culture and respect cultural differences, they can realize the evaluable points of English culture, expand horizon through

communications and change traditional thinking mode so as to improve cross-cultural communication competence.

IV. Current situation of cross-cultural education in English education

1. Teachers' cross-cultural education ability is not strong

Although current English teaching pays attention to cross-cultural education, cross-cultural education awareness of many English teachers is not strong with narrow cross-cultural view. Many English teachers still rest on traditional teaching idea and consider English teaching is to impart language knowledge. Hence, they attach importance to language use skills and grammar in teaching, and ignore cultural factors. In recent years, as discussion on the problems in English teaching increase, English teachers also start to pay attention to adding cultural education contents in English teaching. However, in actual application, they just focus on how to introduce culture, but fail to realize the functions of Chinese culture in cross-cultural communications. Therefore, they ignore introduction to native language culture in English teaching. Hence, this is also a problem existing in cross-cultural education.

2. Citizens' mentality to English culture is irrational

For Chinese citizens, they have different purposes for English learning. Some learn English in order to gain a certification and gain a better promotion opportunity; some learn English in order to cope with examinations; some learn English in order to obtain the diploma. Currently, except examinations, no other method can be used to check language competence and communication competence. In addition, in Chinese traditional culture, social ethics structure and national conditions are important components. These factors impose great impacts on English study and especially learning motivation. At present, English learning motivation of Chinese citizens is not instrumental function of English, but external factors play a role (especially entering a higher school) ^[5]. For a long time, Chinese education mode is knowledge infusion mode, and students' ability cultivation fail to be valued. Even now, students basically learn English through recitation.

3. Cross-cultural education contents are deficient

Till now, China still has no official teaching materials based on culture

introduction. Besides, references are very few. Existing materials are not all-round and lack systematicness. In addition, cultural explanations which can be found in dictionaries and supporting teaching materials are very limited. Even Chinese college English teaching materials, most textbooks mainly introduce western culture and almost do not involve cross-cultural education. The contents related to Chinese culture are even fewer. Meanwhile, teaching materials lack English cultural knowledge and social knowledge. These are to the disadvantage of learners to expand their horizon and improve their English communication level. These are also against cross-cultural communication.

V. Measures to enhance cross-cultural citizenship education in Chinese English education

1. Establish equal cultural communication awareness

The final purpose of English education is to cultivate talents with cross-cultural communication competence. So, during learning English culture, it is required to correctly guide students, or else students will be alienated from Chinese culture due to learning English culture. Currently, Chinese English learners are continuously busy with TOEFL and IELTS examinations. English culture brings fierce impacts on Chinese traditional culture. For example, McDonald's and KFC can be seen everywhere. Hence, in English teaching, it is required to enhance education force of Chinese culture whole communicating English culture. Learners should own a sense of national pride. Meanwhile, cultural equality should be reflected. English culture and Chinese culture are equal. Based on this, students should grasp English knowledge, understand specific cultural context of English application and really get cross-cultural communication competence.

2. Fully and rationally utilize teaching materials

Currently, in Chinese English teaching materials, textbooks will basically involve English cultural background. Both themes of textbooks and the depth are mature. Besides, some involve the gap between Chinese culture and English culture. These can be used in cross-cultural education. Thus, teachers should think flexibly, continuously excavate contents in teaching materials and apply the contents in

English teaching. In ordinary English classroom teaching, teachers should fully understand connotation of teaching materials, combine various materials (including situational dialogue and listening training) to carry out cross-cultural education for learners, reflect the differences between Chinese culture and English culture, and mobilize students' English learning and make them actively explore western culture, expand their horizon. In this way, learners can more clearly see differences of diverse cultures.

3. Improve English teachers' cross-cultural awareness

In English teaching, teachers play an important role. Especially in the process of cultivating students' cross-cultural awareness, the function is more critical. English teaching orientation is influenced by cross-cultural communication awareness. If teachers' teaching idea falls behind, and they only pay attention to language teaching and ignore culture teaching, learners will be greatly affected. Their cross-cultural communication awareness cannot be cultivated. So, teachers should continuously learn, improve their cultural quality, correctly understand cultural diversity, train their cross-cultural communication awareness and then influence students and guide them to conduct cross-cultural learning.

4. Apply multiple methods to cultivate citizens' cross-cultural awareness

Cross-cultural communication awareness cultivation is mainly achieved through English teaching. So, educators may apply multiple methods to cultivate learners' cross-cultural awareness in English teaching process. Firstly, contrast method may be adopted. When teachers are explaining English culture, they can contrast similar Chinese culture and fusion text content. For example, when the knowledge about American and Britain countries is involved, such method can be used. Through comparison, differences in language use habits and logic thinking modes can be reflected.

Secondly, cooperative learning method can be used. Prior to teaching, teachers may tell classroom arrangement and teaching tasks to learners in advance and encourage them to know the contents actively and look up related materials to learn cultural differences. In classroom teaching process, competitions in groups may be

adopted to mobilize learners' initiative and enthusiasm and train students' cross-cultural communication awareness [6]. Finally, schools or education organizations should hold debate competitions or special lectures at regular intervals in allusion to learners, collect typical differences between English culture and Chinese culture, make scattered knowledge form system, help learners form systematical understanding and root cross-cultural communication awareness in the mind of learners.

VI. Conclusions

Cross-cultural communication is the fundamental objective of English exudation. It is also a requirement for Chinese citizens in the new world environment. Currently, cross-cultural citizenship education also has some problems. Teachers' cross-cultural awareness needs improving. Citizens should correctly cognize the importance of cross-cultural communication, and treat different cultures equally. The training process of cross-cultural communication competence is complex, so multiple methods must be used to continuously explore contents in teaching materials, contrast cultural differences, utilize teaching materials to the largest extent, make cutinizes correctly cognize cultural differences, tolerate English culture and identify essence and dross of English culture. Furthermore, teachers are required to keep studying, improve their cultural quality, train their cross-cultural communication awareness and cultivate citizens with cross-cultural communication awareness by various means.

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