

A Survey on Cultivating College Non-English Majors' Abilities to Express Chinese Culture in English through College English Teaching

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Abstract—To cultivate college non-English majors' abilities of expressing Chinese culture in English, our program is to compare and contrast western and Chinese culture based on topics in the existing college English textbooks which are target culture materials. To probe students' attitudes to the way of teaching Chinese culture in college English course and the amount of Chinese culture input and output in college English course, problems or difficulties students met in learning Chinese culture in college English course, and students' suggestions on learning Chinese culture in college English course, a questionnaire was implemented after the three-month experiment. Results of the questionnaire were discussed. And suggestions on Chinese culture teaching of college English course were offered according to the results of the questionnaire.

Keywords—Cultivating students' ability of expressing Chinese culture in English; way of comparing and contrasting western and Chinese culture; Students' opinion on the way of Chinese culture teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

College English teaching, serving as a platform for college non-English majors of Chinese mainland to increase cross-linguistic knowledge and cross-cultural communicative competence, should make effort to strike a balance between western and Chinese culture input and output so that they can avoid cross-cultural communication failure in talking about Chinese culture in English. However, most college non-English majors of Chinese mainland can not talk about Chinese culture in English when communicating with foreign friends (Zhang, 2002). To cultivate college non-English majors' abilities of expressing Chinese culture in English, our program is to compare and contrast western and Chinese culture based on topics in the existing college English textbooks which are target culture materials (Chen & Peng, 2015). To probe students' attitude to the way of teaching Chinese culture in college English course and the amount of Chinese culture input and output in college English course, problems or difficulties students met in learning Chinese culture in college English course, and students' suggestions on learning Chinese culture in college English course, a questionnaire was implemented by the present authors after the three-month experiment. This

paper aims at probing Students' opinion on the way of Chinese culture teaching and offering suggestions on Chinese culture teaching of college English course in future.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is reported that college non-English majors' abilities of expressing Chinese culture in English are limited, only about 28 percent of Chinese mainland college non-English majors can manage to express some celebrating activities of Chinese festivals (Zhang, 2002). Chen et al. (2009) claims that, as for the item "the degree of difficulty in expressing Chinese culture in English", only 10 percent of the subjects choose "a little difficult", 72 percent of the subjects answer "difficult", 18 percent of the subjects think "very difficult", and that, as for the item "the main problem you met when communicating with English speakers", 41 percent of the subjects answer "barrier of expressing Chinese culture in English", 16 percent of the subjects think "lack of Chinese culture knowledge". It is difficult for teachers and students to seek Chinese culture in English. Xiao et al. (2010) demonstrate that the existing College English text-books in China contain very little content of Chinese culture, and that most college English teachers rarely talk about Chinese culture in College English Teaching in class. So chances to read and listen to Chinese culture in English are very little.

Krashen's Monitor Model (Krashen, 1982) says that comprehensible input is indispensable to explain second language acquisition. Gass & Selinker (2008) claim that input alone is not sufficient for language learning, for hearing or reading language, people often interpret the meaning without using syntax. Swain (1985) argues that the role of output is crucial in the development of a second language, and she introduces the notion of comprehensible output or "pushed" output. Swain (1995) claims that output would seem to have a potentially significant role in the development of syntax and morphology". Output is generally considered to have a positive effect on language learning. So it is essential to emphasize Chinese culture input and output in English in College English teaching in order to cultivate Chinese mainland college non-English majors' ability of expressing Chinese culture in English.

III. DESIGN AND METHOD

The present study adopted questionnaire to collect data, and employed the qualitative approach to analyze the data. Discussion and suggestions were offered.

A. Subjects

Thirty subjects, who were taught Chinese culture in English by comparing and contrasting western and Chinese culture based on topics in the existing college English textbooks which are target culture materials for three-month experiment, were randomly chosen. They were college freshmen and enrolled in September, 2013. All of them were Chinese coming from different provinces of China. Their average age was 18 years old. The subjects consisted of 18 (60%) females and 12 (40%) males. And before the experiment, they had studied English for 6 years at least.

B. Instrument

The instrument of the study was a 10-item questionnaire, which were designed by the present author. The questionnaire was composed of one open-ended question and nine closed questions that asked subjects to choose one answer from the multiple-choice fashion: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neither agree nor disagree (N), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD).

C. Research Procedure

After the experiment, the questionnaires were hand out to the subjects by the present author. They received instructions about how to fill out the questionnaires in order to get rid of confusion. They were asked to fill out the questionnaire within 15 minutes in class. And the present author collected questionnaire in time. Then the present author made the census of the collected questionnaire, and the descriptive analysis of the data. For instance, percentage was used. Based on the discussion of questionnaire analysis, suggestions were offered.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

30 Questionnaires were distributed to the subjects, and 30 returned Questionnaires were valid ones. Data of the closed questions from the questionnaire are as follows:

TABLE I. DATA OF CLOSED QUESTIONS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Items	Percentage				
	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	83.3%	10%	6.7%	0	0
2	80%	13.3%	6.7%	0	0
3	66.7%	6.7%	6.7%	10%	10%
4	10%	10%	6.7%	6.7%	66.7%
5	43.3%	16.7%	10%	10%	20%
6	20%	10%	6.7%	20%	43.3%
7	30%	13.3%	6.7%	26.7%	23.3%
8	6.7%	10%	3.3%	46.7%	33.3%
9	6.7%	10%	3.3%	50%	30%

^a. Note: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neither agree nor disagree (N),

^b. disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD).

Data for the only open-ended question from the questionnaire are as follows:

TABLE II. DATA OF THE ONLY OPEN-ENDED QUESTION FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Suggestions	Percentage
More time for Chinese culture in class	60%
More topics for Chinese culture in and out of class	46.7%
Introducing more special terms of Chinese culture in English	40%
Systematical material of Chinese culture in English for reading	43.3%
Systematical material of Chinese culture in English for listening	20%
Creating chances for students to express Chinese culture in English	66.7%
Ways to practice Chinese culture in English, like debate, role play, etc.	36.6%

The functions of the 10 items from the questionnaire are as follows:

TABLE III. ITEMS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND THEIR FUNCTION

Items	Functions
1. I like the way of teaching Chinese culture by comparing and contrasting western and Chinese culture in college English course.	1. the way of teaching Chinese culture in college English course
2. I have a vivid image on similarities and differences between western and Chinese culture concerning the same topic after comparing and contrasting them in class.	
3. My favorite way to learn Chinese culture in English is to read the material first, and then to talk about it in English.	
4. My favorite way to learn Chinese culture in English is to listen to the material first, and then to talk about it in English.	
5. I am satisfied with the amount of Chinese culture input and output in college English course.	2. the amount of Chinese culture input and output in college English course
6. I'd like to know more about Chinese culture in English on the topics introduced in class so that I can express Chinese culture in English fluently in cross-cultural communication.	
7. I want to learn Chinese culture in English systematically and fully so that I am confident in cross-cultural communication.	
8. My English is so limited that I can't understand the English material about Chinese culture.	3. problems or difficulties students met in learning Chinese culture in college English course
9. I am not interested in English learning, so I don't want to learn the English material about Chinese culture, too	
10. What is your suggestion on learning Chinese culture in college English course? Please explain in detail.	4. students' suggestions on learning Chinese culture in college English course.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Discussion on the Results of the Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire (Table 1 and Table 3) showed that the way of teaching Chinese culture by comparing and contrasting western and Chinese culture in college English teaching was very good, but the way of Chinese culture input should be adjusted to students' preference of English learning style. As most of subjects (84.3%) liked the way of teaching Chinese culture, 93.3% subjects can have a vivid image on the similarities and differences between western and Chinese culture by the way of teaching Chinese culture in class. Over half of the subjects (73.6%) preferred learning Chinese culture in English by the way of reading, only 20% subjects liked learning Chinese culture in English by the way of listening.

With regard to the amount of Chinese culture input and output in college English course, Data from the questionnaire (Table 1 and Table 3) indicated that 60% subjects were satisfied with it, 30% subjects liked to know more about Chinese culture in English, 43.3% subjects wanted to learn Chinese culture in English systematically and fully. For the time is limited in college English class, Perhaps considering Chinese culture as a selective course in the fourth semester can meet some students' needs to learn Chinese culture in English systematically and fully.

Concerning problems or difficulties students met in learning Chinese culture in college English course, data from the questionnaire (Table 1 and Table 3) suggested that 16.7% subjects were not interested in English learning, and did not want to learn the English materials of Chinese culture, too. And 16.7% subjects' English was so limited that they could not understand the materials. Maybe, English teachers have to stimulate their interest in English learning and help those who are in trouble in learning English.

In terms of students' suggestion on learning Chinese culture in college English course (Table 2), 60% subjects suggested more time spent in teaching Chinese culture in class, about half of the subjects hoped to learn more topics, special terms about Chinese culture. 66.7% subjects needed more chances for Chinese culture output in English in class, 36.6% subjects offered ways of outputting Chinese culture in English, like debate, role play, etc. In fact, those suggestions mainly focused on the input and output of Chinese culture in English, which indicated that English teachers had to consider proper amount and way of Chinese culture input and output in college English teaching.

Therefore, the results of the questionnaire showed that, in general, subjects were satisfied with the way of teaching Chinese culture in class. Due to students' different English learning styles and interest, English teachers have to consider proper amount and ways of Chinese culture input and output in English in class, which accords with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) and Swain's notion (Swain, 1985) of comprehensible output or "pushed" output. Moreover, English teachers have to stimulate students' interest in English learning and help slow learners of English with Chinese culture learning.

B. Suggestions on Chinese Culture Teaching of College English Course

With the development of the globalization, multi-culture coexists, and the ability to express one's native culture in English is the basis of cross-cultural communication. Kramsch (1993) suggests that culture teaching and foreign language instruction be compatible in class. College English teaching, serving as a platform of increasing college non-English majors' cross-linguistic knowledge and cross-cultural competence, should integrate language and culture teaching. Here are some suggestions on Chinese culture teaching of college English course:

Firstly, to try to strike a balance between western and Chinese culture input and output through college English teaching. For example, instead of only introducing western culture, college English teachers can introduce Chinese culture by comparing and contrasting western and Chinese culture based on topics in the existing college English textbooks in college English teaching.

Secondly, in order to improve college non-English majors' abilities of expressing Chinese culture in English, it is necessary to ensure certain amount of Chinese culture input and output in English, for example, assignment of reading and listening materials of Chinese culture in English in and out of class, and role play, debate etc. after completing the input task.

Thirdly, to meet the needs of students' different learning style and interest, college English teachers can combine several ways of Chinese culture input and output in English, such as retelling, discussion and so on after reading or listening to cultural materials.

Fourthly, college English teachers should find ways to help slow learners of English to understand Chinese culture materials in English, and to stimulate their interest of English learning. For instance, teachers or top students explain the teaching material of Chinese culture to slow learners of English in detail after class; English songs or films embodying Chinese culture can stimulate students' interest in learning Chinese culture in English.

Lastly, college English curriculum can offer a Chinese culture course as one of the selective courses in the fourth semester so that some students can learn it systematically and fully. As Byram (1989) argues that culture teaching in foreign language instruction should be set up an independent course.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. Main Findings

Based on the results of the questionnaire, the major findings coming from the present study can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, most of subjects were satisfied with the way of teaching Chinese culture by comparing and contrasting western and Chinese culture based on topics in the existing college English textbooks in college English instruction, and the amount and way of Chinese culture input and output.

Secondly, college English teachers have to seek ways to help slow learners of English with Chinese culture learning, to

integrate ways of Chinese culture input and output to meet students' learning style.

Thirdly, it is necessary to set up a Chinese culture course as one of the selective courses in college English curriculum so that some students can learn Chinese culture in English systematically and fully.

B. Limitations and Suggestions on Future Research

However, the present research unavoidably included some limitations, like small sample size, lacking class observation and reflection etc.. And here are some suggestions for future research. Firstly, larger sample size is indispensable. Secondly, interview, class observation and reflection could get more findings.

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