

# Research on College English Culture Teaching in the Perspective of Multiculturalism

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**Abstract.** Multiculturalism is a strong theoretical trend which is based on culture equality and culture diversity and is helpful in developing students' intercultural awareness as well as their intercultural communicative competence. Specific teaching strategies are presented in an attempt to incorporate culture teaching with language teaching through the output of multi-cultural interaction between learners and teachers or among learners. Finally, it draws a conclusion that it is feasible to promote students' full evolution in communicative abilities through these strategies.

## Introduction

Since culture is the core in the study of inter-culture communication and culture teaching, it is absolutely necessary to discuss the definition of culture which will help us comprehend culture's property and character. The relationship between language and culture has already become an important research task; more and more people realize it is impossible to be successful for language teaching with ignorance or indifference towards culture. While more and more people who specialize in various fields and have great communicative competence in English are greatly needed, the communicative competence of most Chinese is not very encouraging. It is not adequate merely to realize the goal of culture teaching but to investigate the obstacles in culture teaching and causes of its ineffectiveness with a view to offering possible ways to improve culture teaching. It is not rare to be found that those with a firm knowledge of grammar and a large vocabulary often get stuck and are unable to carry out their real intention in their normal process of communication. This unsatisfied outcome of English teaching results from the ineffective and inadequate implementation of culture teaching. Therefore, how to improve the culture teaching effectiveness has become a major concern in English teaching. From the analysis of the present condition about culture teaching in China we realize that home culture hasn't been included in present culture teaching under the influence of monism, instead, there is merely the introduction of western cultures. It is necessary to cultivate students' multicultural view and establish an idea that all cultures are created equal due to cultural diversity and pluralism of intercultural communication. Therefore, culture teaching should include the education about indigenous culture, target culture and diversified cultures. The author puts forward culture teaching under the guidance of multiculturalism theory and Kramsch's double-direction interactive theory. The focus of this approach lies in that students experience cultural differences and cultural diversity within real or virtual physical and social context. The interactions between students and teachers, indigenous culture and alien cultures (including target culture) are finally generalized into unique feeling, critical thinking and perfection of personality.

## **Researches on Multicultural education**

Multiculturalism is not only a single word, but also a concept, a new theory, and a new policy. Multiculturalism first came as a theory in the early 20th century but did not gain its popularity as 1960's when it was used as a policy to deal with the diversification of population due to immigrants. Multiculturalism first appears in Canada and Australia, and then spreads to America. The essence of multiculturalism consists in that it requires the public recognition and affirmation of cultural differences. We live in a world, in which there are deep-seated conflicts between cultures embodying different values. Different peoples and cultures have different values, beliefs and truths, many of which are incommensurate but all of which are valid in their own context. Social justice requires not just that individuals be treated as political equals, but that their cultural beliefs are also treated as equally valid, and indeed are institutionalized in the public sphere. Multicultural education tries to eliminate ethnocentrism which usually leads to misunderstanding, misconception, stereotyping, and discrimination toward other cultures.

## **Multicultural Interactive Teaching in Classrooms**

The task of English language teaching is not only to develop students' linguistic competence but also to cultivate their social cultural competence. In the practice of language teaching in higher education in China, cultural courses have been involved in the teaching syllabus such as giving lectures on culture information, compiling culture textbooks, and adding cultural background knowledge in language textbooks.

### **A. Using the theory of multicultural education to instruct CT in FLT**

Nowadays, with its global status, English has been playing a very active role in world affairs and has the largest speaking population as a foreign language. It is the British military power that first establishes English as an international language and later the American economic and it. Multicultural interactive teaching stresses on training learners' ability to communicate creatively via discourse analysis, cultural dialogue and multicultural thought with an aim to reach Zhongxiang, Gao understanding and coexistence between multiple cultures (Wang 2006). A multicultural view is of the same importance. Students should possess not only the ability to participate into modern society but also the ability to inherit and develop their indigenous culture. After comparison, self-reflection and combination of two and more cultures, students will construct their new knowledge system and view of culture. The new cultural teaching can broaden the teaching scope, enrich the teaching content and make teaching process more complex. The most important of all, the establishment of home culture's status realizes equal communications through multicultural interactions. And it is so important to Chinese EFL learners to be able to express Chinese culture in English.

### **B. Cultural teaching strategies**

#### **a. Make your classroom multicultural**

Currently, what are heatedly being crammed are Euro-American cultural values and a great number of FLT learners dream of being a citizen of the United States after their graduation. In our opinion, it is not that the FLT learners should be blamed but that China's current FLT are responsible for the embarrassment in terms of its mode, which ignores the learners' acquisition of Chinese culture. our government seems to have started a number of projects meant to prevent China from falling into the abyss similar to the American one, in which the United States are desperately struggling far reservation of Indian culture. Teaching of cultural diversity should be adopted at every grade level in China's education. As regarding China's FLT, cultural diversity should be started from the beginning stage. We thus believe that a multicultural FLT classroom can be guaranteed when Chinese Language & culture and English Language & culture are equally absorbed by the learners.

#### **b. Create an authentic classroom environment**

Classroom decorations and displays for all kinds of poster, cartoons, maps, newspaper, acting

texts and exhibitions of real, including such trivia as theatre tickets and programs, bus and train tickets, railway and airline timetables, restaurant menus, and so on create a visual and tangible presence of the alien community. This is particularly important in a foreign language setting where the reality of language in the speech community is geographically and psychologically far removed from the classroom. (Stern, 1999:223) This technique is usually used to arouse the students' interest and provide a real cultural environment to them and help them get familiar with the target language's culture as well as other alien cultures quickly. Besides, when students enjoy their decorations, they definitely feel strong self-esteem and empowerment, those with low linguistic efficiency in particular, because of teachers' trust and support.

c. Cultural discussion

The whole class has a face-to-face discussion following a certain procedure on a specific cultural topic in order to settle a practical problem, have a deep comprehension about a theme or make a collective decision, so this is a student-centered strategy. Students are expected to develop intense awareness of participation and great patience in listening to others' advice as well as the ability to express their own unique viewpoints explicitly and to intake knowledge from the group. Teachers merely give indications or corrections but leave ample time for students to think, raise suggestions, seek reasons and make judgments. Cultural discussion helps intensify students' self-esteem because students get feel their remarks are the contribution to active learning. Cultural discussion practices students' communicative competence because it requires every speaker not only to describe unique ideas with great eloquence but also learn to listen attentively, show respect and exchange ideas on the base of equality and freedom.

d. Cultural exchange

Cultural exchange refers to the exchange of students and teachers with foreign countries to experience different teaching environment and develop communicative competence through the interaction with teachers and students there who can speak English. They must become a temporary "insider" and immerse themselves in the target culture for a certain period of time. This strategy makes on-the-spot observation possible and enables students and teachers to accumulate valuable cultural research materials through the observational records.

e. Cultural conflict

Kramsch(1993) first introduces the concept "cultural conflict". Sometimes the same discourse(text) gain a totally different meaning under a new context created by teachers in a multicultural classroom. Teachers should perceive the conflicts and guide students to reexamine the context, find out the reason and dissolve misunderstanding. Teaching activities should be versatile and learning tasks be challenging. The previously mentioned strategies such as cultural cooperation and cultural can be employed, group discussion, report-back meeting, "for or against" debate are good forms, too.

## Conclusion

Multiculturalism theory helps students establish an idea of respecting individuals, developing personalities and nurturing intercultural awareness through integrating all kinds of cultural contents that affect each other rather than simply adding them together. From the standpoint of their indigenous cultures, students undergo critical study in learning alien cultures and achieve self-development. The disadvantage of the dissertation consists in its lack of empirical study in the classroom because of time limit. There is a corresponding lack of knowledge of how to structure curriculum and instruction for multicultural texts in any subject. There are more researches that can be done in this area.

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