

# The Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Ability in College English Teaching

Yang Zhao

Department of Foreign Language  
Xi'an Jiaotong University City College  
Xi'an, China

**Abstract**—This study analyzes the current situation of intercultural communication ability training in college English teaching. The general description of the problems of intercultural communication ability training is also mentioned. Only the teaching of the target language culture has led to the phenomenon of “Chinese cultural aphasia” in society. In the process of English learning, intercultural communication should be a two-way communication between target language and mother tongue. Then the strategies of strengthening intercultural communication ability in college English teaching are discussed.

**Keywords**—*intercultural communication; Chinese culture aphasia; college English teaching*

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the birth of multimedia and the popularity of the Internet, people from different societies, cultures and different regions have produced more interactions. And people increasingly realize the importance of intercultural communication in the real world. This tendency makes the interaction of different societies and cultures an inevitable reality.

In the foreign language education community, the introduction of cultural teaching in foreign language teaching has been widely recognized. The majority of foreign language teachers have realized that merely teaching language knowledge is far from satisfying the needs of students. It is the ultimate goal of foreign language education to cultivate students' intercultural communication skills. Language education should be largely cultural education.

However, in foreign language teaching, the cultural profile of the target language countries is mainly introduced, while the study of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation is neglected, which will inevitably lead to the phenomenon of “one-sided” culture in foreign language education. In recent years, the “Belt and Road” has gradually advanced from the political economy to the cultural field. How to construct the “Belt and Road” Chinese cultural communication system and let Chinese culture “going out” has become a hot topic of domestic research. Today, with the increasing frequency of cultural exchanges, the transformation of Chinese culture in the status of international cultural exchanges also stimulates foreign language teachers to reflect on the current cultural teaching

from different aspects. Only the teaching of target language culture input is not suitable for the output of current mother tongue culture. The need to cultivate students' correct communication consciousness and carry forward the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation is the real goal of intercultural communication.

## II. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING

Intercultural communication (or cross-cultural communication) refers to the communication between native speakers and non-native speakers. It can also broadly refer to the communication between people who differ in language and cultural background.

For a long time, too much emphasis has been placed on the negative transfer of mother tongue in foreign language learning and the positive influence of mother tongue and its culture is often ignored in foreign language learning. The focus of both teachers and students is on the input of target language culture. In the long run, students will suffer “Chinese culture aphasia”.

In foreign language teaching, the concept of “Chinese culture aphasia” was first proposed by Professor Cong Cong of Nanjing University. He pointed out: “Many Chinese young scholars, although they have a fairly high level of English, have never shown the profound cultural literacy and cultural personality independence that scholars from ancient cultural powers should have in their interaction with Westerners. Some of them will immediately show Chinese cultural aphasia once they enter the context of English communication.” This article has also aroused the attention of foreign language circles on Chinese culture teaching. Many foreign language education scholars have carried out empirical research on this issue. The results show that “Chinese culture aphasia” is indeed prevalent among English learners in China.

## III. PROBLEMS OF CURRENT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ABILITY TRAINING

### A. The Lack of Appropriate Teaching Resources

At present, English learners have a wide range of ways and resources to learn the target language culture, while the

English resources for introducing native language culture are relatively scarce. The widely-used college English textbooks only involve a small proportion of Chinese cultural content, and the description is not detailed enough, such as "New College English", "New Vision College English" and so on. Most teachers have difficulty in clarifying the knowledge of cultural teaching and scientifically and reasonably selecting teaching materials.

#### *B. Disadvantages of Traditional Classroom Teaching Mode*

The traditional Chinese classroom teaching model has been focusing on teachers' positive teaching since ancient times without emphasizing students' reverse feedback. The teacher actively teaches and imparts knowledge to the students, and the students learn passively. The consciousness formed by such a teaching mechanism has become ingrained, and it is very difficult to change the teaching mode in a short time.

The cultivation of intercultural communication ability requires students not only to learn the knowledge imparted by teachers, but also to internalize and reflect with their own cultural identity, and to integrate with the knowledge they have learned in different contexts.

However, it is a relatively gradual adaptation process for students, who have been accustomed to the passive acceptance of knowledge in the traditional teaching mode, to immediately internalize and reflect on the intercultural communication knowledge they have learned in the classroom, and then form interaction with teachers and classmates. Besides, teachers need to use new teaching mode to cultivate students' intercultural communication ability. It is inseparable from the continuous accumulation of practical operations and experience. The traditional classroom education is largely a cramming teaching mode, coupled with the lack of specific quantitative evaluation system, the cultivation of intercultural communication ability of Chinese college students often becomes a mere formality.

### IV. STRATEGIES OF CULTIVATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

The Chinese Ministry of Education has continuously taken measures to promote the reform of college English teaching and change the traditional teaching mode, intercultural communication has been listed as one of the main classifications in college English teaching a few years ago. Under this circumstance, foreign language teachers should actively reflect on the current cultural teaching and explore strategies to strengthen the cultivation of intercultural communication ability in college English teaching from different aspects.

#### *A. Comparing the Similarities and Differences Between Chinese and Western Cultures*

The way of thinking is the product of the development of specific social history and culture. The oriental way of thinking is characterized by focusing on the unity of opposites and harmony, with special emphasis on integration;

the West is concerned with the struggle against the opposite and focuses on analysis. In addition, whether it is in China or in the West, language taboos cover a wide range. Due to the historical development of China and the West, differences in social systems and values, the content and form of language taboos are different. Focus on language taboos, understand cultural connotations, and be able to use English language correctly and flexibly. Paying attention to language taboos and understanding cultural connotations will greatly promote the correct and flexible use of English language.

#### *B. Studying the Cultural Background of Vocabulary and Idioms*

Vocabulary and idioms are the parts of the language that best reflect the characteristics of national culture, which have broad connotations and extensions. A large number of vocabulary and idioms in English and Chinese are rooted in two distinct cultural environments and reflect different national image and cultural implication. So studying the cultural background of vocabulary and idioms, and comparing them, will enable us to have a more detailed understanding of the national culture and the culture of foreign countries.

For example, when the word "dragon" is explained to the students, the "Dragon" symbolizes majesty, spirit, and strength in China. It is a sacred animal that brings auspiciousness and is a symbol of the royal family. However, in the eyes of Westerners, "dragon" is a smoldering fire, symbolizing the evil and dark creatures, which is quite different from the Chinese understanding of the dragon. This is the problem that occurred when the "Dragon" was translated into the Western world.

#### *C. Using a Variety of Teaching Methods to Improve Students' Cultural Sensitivity*

According to the teaching content, teachers can adopt various teaching methods, such as word meaning mining method, idiom comparison method and translation contrast method, and then cooperate with task-driven classroom activities such as oral report, group discussion, impromptu speech and interview. In addition to completing basic language learning in the classroom, students should also be fully provided with opportunities for time, environment and practice to learn with the help of various modern teaching aids such as internet, multimedia, newspapers and magazines, slide projectors, video recorders, etc. It aims to create language situations for students, guide them to contact Western culture, and improve students' sensitivity to culture to help them truly improve their intercultural communication skills.

#### *D. Organizing Extracurricular English Activities*

Learning a language is best done in a certain context and atmosphere. It is not enough to train students in intercultural communication only in the classroom. Therefore, teachers are more responsible for creating an atmosphere suitable for students to stimulate students' interest and encourage students to participate.

Extracurricular activities can be organized and carried out to fully utilize students' spare time. For example, The "Golden Autumn Foreign Language Culture Festival" in our college, including a series of activities, such as English speech contest, English reading contest, English-Chinese translation contest, English vocabulary contest, English Film dubbing competition, English drama competition, etc. These activities create a good atmosphere for English learning and cultural exchange, which are deeply loved by students.

#### *E. Utilizing English Films, Television and Other Resources to Assist Teaching*

English original film and television resources are rich, providing information in various fields and helping achieve different teaching purposes. Many excellent film and television works have successfully reproduced specific historical and cultural backgrounds, which is the most interesting way to strengthen students' understanding of English culture. Today's college students have a wide range of interests and are curious, passionate, energetic, and creative about all new things. But there are large individual differences in English proficiency. Therefore, teachers should reasonably select English movies, TV dramas and related materials, to stimulate their interest in learning and improve their language skills.

#### *F. Strengthening the Awareness of Foreign Language Teachers*

Teachers play a leading role in cultural communication teaching. As a teacher, if the knowledge of intercultural background is poor, it is impossible to pass the knowledge to the students in the teaching process. Emphasizing English and American culture in English teaching, developing students' sensitivity to foreign culture require teachers not only to have higher English language skills, but also to have a profound British and American cultural literacy.

As new cultures continue to emerge, English teachers also need to constantly observe, summarize, and compare different cultures. Therefore, it is necessary to provide teachers with opportunities for further study, to strengthen the training of the intercultural communication, and to improve the quality of the teaching staff as a whole. Teachers themselves must constantly learn, actively integrate with the new era, update their cultural reserve in a timely manner, and keep in pace with the trend of contemporary society.

### V. CONCLUSION

Language is the carrier of culture. The language that leaves culture is like a person who has lost his soul. In the context of global cultural exchanges, the present foreign language teaching is still highly criticized, because intercultural communication should be a two-way communication between the target language and the mother tongue. Both cultural output and input are indispensable. The teaching of mother tongue culture in English teaching is an essential content. Only an equal and two-way communication is an effective exchange that can achieve a

win-win situation. Therefore, on the one hand, teachers should be determined to understand the cultivation of college English education is not only to learn a good language, to understand foreign cultures, to perceive differences between different cultures, but also to cultivate intercultural communication. On the other hand, teachers should strive to cultivate students' equal awareness of mother tongue culture and target language culture, and encourage them to learn the target language while taking into account the accumulation of mother tongue culture and the English expression of mother tongue culture. In this way intercultural communication can be truly successful, and China's excellent traditional culture can be spread.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Cai Qing. On Intercultural Communication Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2011.
- [2] Cong Cong. "Chinese Culture Aphasia": Defects in English Teaching in China. Guangming Daily, 2000.
- [3] Lu Zhou. Research on the Cultivation of College English Intercultural Communication Ability Overseas English, 2018.
- [4] Liang Huan. On the Introduction of Culture in English Teaching Higher Education Forum, 2010.
- [5] Zhang Hongling. Intercultural foreign language teaching Shanghai: Foreign Language Education Press, 2007.