

# Study on Integration of Culture Input into College English Teaching

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**Abstract**—Culture input has long been ignored in most College English Teaching class, since the teaching focuses are generally related to the instrumental nature of the college English course. However, it is widely acknowledged that language and culture are closely related, which are inseparable and interact with each other. Therefore, to realize the goal of language teaching, it is of great importance to develop student's cultural awareness through culture input in the process of English Teaching.

**Keywords**—culture input; college English teaching; integration

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the latest edition of College English Teaching Guide (issued by the Ministry of Education, in 2017), college English course has been clearly defined as a course with dual natures: both instrumental and humanism nature. In terms of the instrumental nature, to further improve students' English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating ability, is what teachers have been making great effort for in today's class. In terms of humanism, college English course should be regarded as one of the important tasks of cross-cultural education, which virtually has been neglected in most English classes today. However, as is well known, language is the carrier of culture and is part of the culture as well. In addition to master a foreign language as a communication tool, students should be supposed to know more about society and culture in foreign countries, to enhance the understanding of different cultures, awareness of similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign culture. In another word, it is also essential to foster students' intercultural communication ability. Against this new historical background, culture input should be necessarily brought into today's college English class, hence to realize the organic integration of the course's instrumental and humanism natures.

## II. THE APPROACHES OF INTEGRATING CULTURE INPUT INTO COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

In real teaching practice, it is necessary to bear in mind that language and culture are inseparable. Based on this, it can consciously combine culture input and language teaching together, so that students learn language in a certain cultural background and experience the exotic culture in practice.

Therefore, effective approaches to integrate culture input into English teaching is of great importance and worthy of our great effort. Three teaching approaches adopted in real teaching practice will be introduced in the following.

First, culture input should be included as a necessary part of teachers' lectures. When giving lectures to students, teachers used to content on the knowledge aspects including lexical, syntax knowledge, grammar, sentence structure and passage structures. In addition to these, when preparing teaching, teachers need to explore teaching materials to add culture aspects into their teaching plans. For example, when teaching Unit 4: The Surprising Purposes of Travelling, in book 3 New Horizon College English (Third Edition), one culture difference is mentioned: "Consider the act of leaving food on the plate: In China, this is often seen as a compliment, a signal that the host has provided enough to eat. But in America the same act is a subtle insult, an indication that the food wasn't good enough to finish." For this part, teachers can conduct a discussion here by asking student's understandings and reflection of this culture differences. Through this teaching activity, students not only have a better understanding of this part of language, but will surely enhance their culture awareness of different cultures.

Second, task-based approach can be adopted to help students gain more culture input.

Task-based approach, as one of the popular teaching method in student-centered class, has been widely used in language teaching and learning class. In college English teaching, teachers can divide the class into groups of 4-5 students and each group will be assigned a task about culture, which means students should do some research work to learn more culture differences or similarities by themselves after the class. For example, when teaching Unit 4 *Five Famous Symbols of American Culture* in Book 3 New Horizon College English (Second Edition), students are encouraged to finish the task about the exploration of the five famous symbols of American. They need to do some research to figure out why *The Statue of Liberty*, *Barbie dolls*, *American Gothic*, *The Buffalo Nickel*, *Uncle Sam*, can become the symbols of American culture. In the process of research work and task presentation, students learn more about culture in target language, which is really win-win for our language teaching.

Third, English movies undoubtedly play an important role of introducing exotic culture to students. Classic British and American movies typically reflect their culture life objectively and authentically. Through these seemingly entertaining learning, students can deeply feel the essence of western culture which will, in turn, greatly stimulate their enthusiasm and initiative in learning English. For example, Unit 3 in Book 3 (New Horizon College English, 2nd edition) *Where Principles Come First* is a passage, trying to illustrate when students are taught the merits of great value, students' academic achievement will naturally follow. When reading the passage, students usually have doubts on the truth of the passage, and couldn't believe the power of the merits of great value. "Mr. Clark "happens to be an American movie, which tells a story about how Mr. Clark help a class of "trouble students "become successful academically. After watching this movie, students feel thrilled by Mr. Clark affectionate teaching approach. They are convinced that the merits of great value are of great importance in our education.

Fourth, intercultural competitions and English culture festivals provide students more chances to explore into different cultures and display what they have learned from English class. In the new historical background, contestants in various English competitions no longer merely compete for their language knowledge but culture knowledge as well. Teachers therefore can make good use of these opportunities to encourage students to take part in these games and enjoy the unique experience brought by these competitions. Through the preparation, participation, and appreciation of these activities, students inevitably get access to much culture and language input which greatly complement our class teaching. What's more, regardless of the result of the competitions, students' motivation and interests to move further on the way towards language learning will be surely motivated.

### III. THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRATION OF CULTURE INPUT INTO COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

With culture input into college English teaching, it is not hard for us to seek the numerous benefits that the integration of the two aspects.

To begin with, activities of culture input greatly stimulate students' learning desire and gradually arouse their interests in College English class. In recent years, quite a few of my peer colleagues complain about student's low motivation to English learning and indifference to teachers' lectures. While for students, similarly, they report that it is hard for them to be attracted by college English class and hardly deprive pleasure from English learning. While culture input, to some extent, turns the teaching pattern into more learner-centered, which means students are more involved in the learning and teaching process. For example, in class discussion, students are supposed to express their views on the culture differences or make comparisons between different cultures. Task preparation and presentation push them to learn, to display. In one word, with these culture activities, students are much more engaged in class and become more active in learning. What's more, classic English movies, culture festivals and competitions diverse college English teaching enormously.

They are fresh, attractive and challenging to this generation of students, which are definitely their favorites.

Secondly, culture input inevitably improves students' language knowledge, a great aid to realize the goal of enhancing student's listening, speaking, reading and writing and translating skills. In most college English class, the teaching focuses tend to be lexical and grammatical knowledge. Students are supposed to master more vocabulary and sentence structures. However, lack of language context and practice of what they have learned, it is hard for most students to achieve what they are suppose to. With culture input activities, students are provided more chances to practice the knowledge input derived from the class. For example, when they express their ideas and present their findings, they have to utilize the language in either written or oral form they have learned and even call for extra knowledge for fulfilling the task. When doing research for group task or prepare for various culture competitions, they unconsciously and surprisingly find that they have finished great readings. What is more, with more culture knowledge, they tend to develop a better understanding of the English passages. It is not hard to notice that when students do the reading with familiar theme or they are interested in the article, despite of the fact that it contains more new words, long and difficult sentences, they can go through it smoothly. Otherwise, passages with strange subjects are generally difficult for students to grasp the main ideas even with simple sentences and structures.

Last but not least, with culture input, students learn to enjoy the exotic culture in English learning, which endows them a valuable open-mindedness and help them become more creative. Multicultural contrasts allow students to have more options to interpret the world. One of my students comments that surfing in the culture study is just like travelling around the world and the travelling in different cultures make him realize that even a trivial thing can have multiple meanings. Obviously, culture learning teaches students learn to be open to ambiguity and thanks to the multicultural contrasts, their cognitive inputs have been greatly expanded. What is more, the confusion and curiosity towards these culture differences naturally evolves students' creative thinking in their learning process. They need to raise questions to show their confusion and misunderstanding. (For example, Do I need to tip waiter in that country? How to greet people for the first time according to their culture? Why thanksgiving is so important to westerners? ). To get rid of the puzzles, they work hard to find the answers and explanations. Clearly, culture learning endows them new perspectives to interpret the world and the culture differences undoubtedly help them to be more creative.

### IV. CONCLUSION

The original goal of language teaching is communication and intercultural communication occurs whenever there is communication between people from different culture background. For example, what happened on the Silk Road, Marco Polo's stay in China, and Zheng He's seven voyages to the Western Seas — they tell us that intercultural communication is as old as history. Therefore, to realize the

goal of language teaching, to equip our students with effective communication ability, culture input is essential. Especially, in this new internet era, with the popularity of the Internet, instantaneous communication is commonplace. Wherever you are, as long as you are online, you can, within seconds, reach your friends in any corner of the world. The 21<sup>st</sup> century calls for people with intercultural background knowledge in addition to their language proficiency. Clearly, the integration of culture input into College English teaching is unavoidable and of great significance. Meanwhile, culture input has injected new experience in the teaching and learning processes, which greatly boost students' learning enthusiasm and shape our student's mind in a new shape. To sum up, Language is the carrier and concrete manifestation of culture. Language and culture are inseparable. Therefore, in College English teaching, teachers should guide students to consciously and systematically improve their understanding of cultural background knowledge, so that they can receive not only pure text knowledge, but comprehensive three-dimensional knowledge of culture. Without understanding the culture contained in language, people cannot really learn this language well. Timely cultural infiltration in College English teaching is bound to help students understand and master English in depth, and in cross-cultural communication practice to overcome cultural barriers and improve their intercultural communicative competence. In college English teaching, it will be necessary to pay attention to the education of English culture, improve the ability of English application and cultural literacy, to achieve the real purpose of education and learning.

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