

Cultivation of cross-cultural awareness in college English teaching

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Abstract—With the implementation and deepening of new curriculum reform, the English teaching quality must meet a higher demand. English teaching is an important and difficult part in the field of education in our country. Due to long-term focus on imparting of language knowledge itself but ignorance of culture teaching, most of the college students' cross-cultural awareness in our country is relatively weak. In English communication, students are likely to make various mistakes or behave disrespectfully in cross-cultural communication due to their miscomprehension of culture background of language. So it is obvious that fostering students' cross-cultural awareness is of great significance in college English teaching process. This paper carries on a simple analytical study on the main approach to cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness in college English teaching.

Keywords—College English teaching; Cross-cultural awareness; cultivating

English is a course with the longest curriculum time in the universities in our country, whose teaching effect is unsatisfactory relatively to the other courses. Many students, after several years' English learning, still cannot effectively use English in communication. There are many factors that can influence the effect of college English teaching, and one of the most important one lies in lacking of targeted cultivation of the students' cross-cultural consciousness. For a foreign language, if students fail to have a detailed understanding of the relationship between language and culture background, they won't achieve an in-depth understanding of the connotation of language or can't use the language to communicate effectively. In recent years, the importance of culture teaching is increasingly valued, and more and more teachers have found the importance of cross-cultural awareness in English teaching and strengthen the cultivation of students' cross-cultural consciousness through a variety of approaches.

I. THE NECESSITY OF TRAINING STUDENTS' CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS

At present, the relationship between language and culture has received extensive attention of educational circles in our country, who have reached certain consensus, so, cultivating students' cross-cultural consciousness becomes a necessity. Language is an important part of culture and has close relation with culture. In language learning, therefore, it is necessary for students to have a

detailed cognition of cultural background so to effectively improve the efficiency of language learning. In college English teaching, the cultivation of the students' consciousness of cross-culture has become a very important teaching content. Judging from the current college English teaching in our country, language and culture study is only limited to senior undergraduates majoring in English. The generation of any kind of language is based on a certain cultural background. Therefore, language cannot be separated from the soil of culture. In order to carry on language teaching, it is necessary for teachers to cultivate students' understanding to the cultural background and their practical ability to use language to communicate effectively.

Language can respond the faith, local conditions and customs of a nation. The appropriate use of language is possible to express people's thoughts and emotions, so language learning is dependent on the cultural background and is inseparable from culture. In the current college English teaching, teachers must strengthen the education of the cultural background and cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness, thus they can effectively improve students' ability to use English and achieve effective communication.^[1]

II. THE REFLECTION OF WEAK CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

A. Misunderstanding in the connotation of language

Due to the different customs and cultures, there are many words in English and Chinese culture having different meanings, therefore, in the process of translation, ambiguity is easy to occur. Such as "dragon" in Chinese culture, the word is a symbol of divine significance, heralding the auspice and prosperity. While in English culture, dragon is fierce raging monster, which must be destroyed by human beings. So, if students do not effectively master English culture background, they are unable to use English thinking mode to understand word and cannot communicate successfully.

B. Difference of taboo words

Taboo expression is a kind of social phenomenon universally existing in Chinese and western culture and is reflected in language learning and use. Westerners value personal privacy, age, salary, marital status and so on. A

person's political views and religious beliefs belong to privacy, so, others have no right to intervene. Talking about these issues will be regarded as interference to the others' privacy, which is an impolite and uncivilized behavior. However, the above taboos do not exist in Chinese culture, because Chinese people are keen to close connection and mutual trust and care.

C. Boldness and disrespect

Etiquette is not only the basic symbol of human civilization, but also an external manifestation of personal ideological quality, moral cultivation and cultural accomplishment. But in cross-cultural exchanges, discourtesy frequently occurs due to cultural differences, what's worse, polite manners often be misinterpreted as absurd and vulgar, and hospitality is often misunderstood as an uncivilized behavior. Sometimes, Chinese people tend to take the initiative to shake hands with others to show their enthusiasm and politeness, but when in contact with British and American people, it is the bold on etiquette. In western cultures, higher-ups, women and seniors can take the initiative to salute to others. Otherwise, it will be regarded as impoliteness.^[2]

III. THE CULTIVATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

In the 1990s, when intercultural communication was primarily brought to Chinese English class, the initial effect is disappointing, which may be caused by Chinese students' tendency to their mother tongue when faced with difficulty in communication and the great difference between Chinese cultural background and western cultural background. Because of this, language skills are hard to be applied in the actual life. In addition, the pressure of the exam-oriented education gives less priority to students' practice of English language skills in class. Instead, college English teachers pay much attention to explaining and teaching vocabulary and grammar knowledge in class. As a consequence, students in college fail to reach a high ability to use English. In order to overcome the problem, college English teachers have been continuously exploring cross-cultural teaching methods and specific measures under the new situation and requirements. Currently, there are diversified approaches to cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness in college English teaching, so, teachers need to consider many factors synthetically according to the practical teaching objectives and teaching principles. On this basis, it is probable to cultivate the students' cross-cultural awareness through the scientific method to integrate language and culture effectively.

A. Setting cultural courses

Language and culture courses are set systematically about western culture in order to enable students come into contact with more western culture, implicative ideology and aesthetic concepts in college English class. At the same time, through the comparison of Chinese and western culture, teachers also can make students realize the diversity of human culture, broaden students' vision and improve

students' humanities knowledge structure continuously. At present, language and culture courses setting in our school has reached certain achievements, and the students also have an unexpected good response to this course, therefore, language and culture courses' setting is probable to provide students with conditions to further understand western culture.

B. Full use of comprehensive English class

Comprehensive English is the main course in the current college English teaching, therefore, teachers should make full use of comprehensive English classroom resources to timely cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness, which not only can get a good result, but also will stimulate students' interest in English learning, improving the learning efficiency as a matter of course. Teachers, in order to cultivate the students' cultural awareness in comprehensive English class and improve the sensitivity of the students in English, should penetrate English culture into all aspects of daily life through different approaches such as vocabulary, grammar, discourse. Teachers can use task-based teaching method and group discussion method to introduce western social and cultural knowledge incisively and vividly for students. At the same time, by using the multimedia technology and film screenings, teachers can strengthen students' the intuitive understanding of English culture and effectively make up for deficiencies in the textbooks. Taking the first volume of college English intensive reading as an example, the course of "Unit 10 Going Home" refers to a western custom tying yellow ribbon customs as a symbol of going home, which is especially significant for people haven't gone back home for a long time. Therefore, to begin with the course, teachers can introduce students the western custom through pictures presentation or stories narration to attract students' interest in learning the course, so it appears easy for students to further read the article after understanding the meaning of yellow ribbon in the westerners' eyes. In addition, in the second volume of college English intensive reading, "Unit 1 The Dinner Party" can be taught combined with an Indian movie "Three Idiots". Before class, teachers can let students have some knowledge of the film which tells a lot about the Indian education system, emotion and hierarchy. If teachers unify these problems in the teaching content in India's party, they must be able to effectively raise students' interest. As a result, students can also know more abundant India culture through the teaching process.^[3]

C. Introduction of reading materials

Reading is an indispensable part in the process of English learning, and the selection of reading materials has an important influence on students' cultural awareness cultivation. So in teaching activities, the teacher should selectively introduce some content involving more western culture in books and magazines so that students can improve their reading ability on the basis of a deeper understanding of western culture. At the same time, teachers can promote students to read more books about history, human and social development, through which students are able to know western society from the perspective of history and culture,

so that students have a bigger improvement in the breadth and depth of knowledge. After all, there are only a few students to study abroad. For the vast majority of students, reading material is the only way to understand the social and cultural situation in foreign countries. Literary works are the most vivid and abundant material to understand a nation's character, mental state, cultural characteristics, customs and social relations and so on, and reading newspapers and magazines is the most direct way to understand all walks of life, all kinds of social problems and social relations. Teachers should remind students the correct reading method, because staying in the accumulation and appreciation of vocabulary will receive little effect. To pay attention to accumulating cultural background, social customs, social relations from materials and copying or recording them in the form of a written or electronic document can improve the accumulation and review of cultural knowledge.

D. Practical experience

In terms of the cultivation of cross-cultural awareness, teachers can make students experience the atmosphere of western culture, which has an extremely vital significance. A western social scene can be simulated in the classroom with students playing different roles. Through the practical experience, it can exercise the communicative competence of students. In addition, since the purpose of learning English is communication, teachers should encourage students to actively participate in English corner, network chat or making pen friend, etc. Various forms of exchange activities help to exercise their English practical ability, for

example, oral or written communication with foreign friends can enable students to feel the charm of the English language so as to generate and maintain interest in learning English because interest is the best teacher and is the biggest motivation of students to acquire knowledge, which can stimulate the students' learning motivation.

IV. CONCLUSION

English is a most widely used language throughout the world at present. Under the background of the growing trend of global economic integration, our country also gives more attention to English education, so, cultivating the students' English communicative ability has become a major goal of the current English teaching. In English teaching, it is necessary to pay attention to the cultivation of students' language and culture consciousness and strengthen students' cognition and understanding of English culture, thereby eliminating errors prone to occur in the process of English communication and achieve real English communication.

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