A Study of the Input of Chinese Culture in College English Teaching

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At present, in English teaching in many colleges and universities, teachers attach great importance to the introduction of western culture, but ignore the introduction and application of Chinese traditional culture. In order to effectively solve this phenomenon, it is necessary to increase the teaching application of Chinese elements in college English teaching, increase the teaching content of the contrast between Chinese and western cultures, and at the same time improve the English teachers’ Chinese traditional cultural literacy. In this paper, the author makes a study on how to better introduce Chinese culture into college English teaching, and puts forward some practical and feasible viewpoints and suggestions.

Keywords: Chinese culture, English teaching, cultural communication, cultural teaching

Introduction

With the rapid development of economy and society in our country, the communication between Chinese people and westerners is expanding, which makes the use of English increase day by day. In the process of this communication, it is also a process of cultural communication between various countries. Because English is widely used, the process of English learning is also the process of learning from each other. In the process of college English teaching in our country, teachers attach great importance to the explanation and dissemination of European and American culture, instead of paying attention to or ignoring the dissemination and application of Chinese traditional culture. This also makes the students trained in our country cannot use English to introduce our traditional culture to the foreigners when communicating with them. Therefore, in college English teaching, teachers should attach great importance to introduce the material of Chinese traditional culture into classroom teaching, so that students can better spread Chinese traditional culture to foreigners in English learning.

This thesis attempts to study the role of Chinese culture in the context of teaching English as an International language. It aims to evoke the awareness of the role of Chinese culture in English classrooms among Chinese educators of English. At the same time, this study tries to reveal Chinese college students’ incompetence in conveying Chinese culture, and as a result, encourages the English teachers to increase English input of Chinese culture in English classrooms.
The Necessity of Chinese Culture Input in College English Teaching

English serves as a medium for intercultural communication embodying mutually exchange of Chinese and foreign culture. Wang Shouren (2002, p. 89) points out that Chinese native culture needs English as a medium to become globalized. If Chinese scholars cannot use English to tell Chinese culture to the world, the dialogue between cultures may change to be a cultural monologue without the sound from China. The intercultural communication is never a process of single side absorption; it is bidirectional which means both “import” and “export” are indispensable. The ever increasing contact between the outside world and China has created opportunities for the Chinese and the foreigners to describe things in Chinese context and express the opinions of both sides about various aspects of China and the Chinese in English. For instance, when communicating with the Chinese, British or American hope the Chinese understand Anglo-American culture and expect them to know more about Chinese culture at the same time. Chinese college students have the responsibility of applying English to introduce Chinese culture to foreign friends who cannot speak Chinese. However, what embarrasses the students is their inability in expressing Chinese culture related topics and matters related to their own traditions and lives, in which the foreigners are most interested.

There are two important factors explaining this phenomenon: The college students know little about their native culture and cannot express them in English (Wu, 2005, p. 66). The phenomenon resulted from the latter factor is called “Chinese culture aphasia”, first cited by Cong Cong in 2000. After more than 10 years of English learning, when communicating with foreigners, many college students still cannot give some simplest expressions on the traditional native culture in English, not to mention developing their intercultural communicative abilities. The status quo of culture teaching in college English teaching partly explains the two factors. For Chinese students, the traditional native culture has been neglected in English teaching, because of the overemphasis on Anglo-American culture. Chinese students gradually lose their interests in studying the traditional native culture as a result of the current situation of western-centric culture teaching in college English teaching. The privilege of western culture will result in the wrong point of view that knowledge on Chinese culture is useless for international communication. However, traditional Chinese culture is indispensible in English teaching because it can be a very important resource for Chinese learning English and developing intercultural communication competence. Wu Dingmin (2005, p. 66) propounds that college English teaching has the responsibility of introducing and recommending Chinese culture by fostering students’ expressiveness of elementary information of Chinese culture in English. If a large amount of Chinese college students acquire the ability of expressing the traditional Chinese culture in English, their English language competence will be improved and the internationalization of Chinese culture will be promoted (Wu, 2008, p. 12). It is necessary and urgent to implement the instruction of Chinese culture in college English teaching. There is also a need to develop English reading materials that reflect traditional Chinese culture. The cultural contents in English learning textbooks and teaching materials should involve target culture and native culture as well as multi-cultures in the world for the need of intercultural communications. Only in this way can college English teaching in China strengthen the expressiveness of Chinese culture, foster students’ awareness of cultural differences, and improve their intercultural communicative competence.
An Attempt to Input Chinese Culture Into English Teaching

First, in view of its necessity and importance, the introduction of Chinese culture into English teaching should be paid attention to and carried out by the state and universities. It is gratifying to note that *College English Teaching Guide* newly released in 2017 points out that the students should strengthen their national language strength, effectively spread the Chinese culture, and improve the soft power of the country while studying and learning the world excellent culture and civilization. This shows that improving students’ ability of Chinese cultural publicity has become the requirement of the country and the times, and has attracted the attention of the state. Unfortunately, there are no specific provisions and embodiment in learning goals and learning content.

Second, colleges and universities should pay attention to English teaching and the input of Chinese culture. For college English teaching, colleges and universities generally set up the courses of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. However, these courses only attach importance to students’ basic English listening, speaking, reading, and writing ability. The teaching materials focus on British and American culture, and there is almost no content of Chinese culture. Therefore, colleges and universities can offer Chinese culture courses in English to help students master the English expression of Chinese culture and further understand the extensive and profound Chinese culture. At the same time, the students can further understand the differences between Chinese and western cultures and improve their cross-cultural awareness.

Third, compared with the teaching materials of British and American culture, the number of teaching materials for Chinese culture in English is small and uneven. Therefore, the education department should plan as a whole and encourage the compilation and publication of fine teaching materials for Chinese culture. The content of teaching materials should not only involve the introduction of Chinese culture, but also express the essence and profound analysis of Chinese culture.

Finally, the key to English teaching is the teaching by teachers. No matter what the Ministry of Education guidelines, school curricula, and the teaching materials are, they are all implemented through teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the English teachers cultural awareness, cross-cultural ability, and Chinese cultural literacy. Ministry of Education, colleges and universities, presses should increase the funding for on-the-job training of English teachers, and actively support and organize English teachers to carry out the training and competition of Chinese culture teaching, with a view to improve their professional level and professional quality. Only when the English teachers’ Chinese culture literacy improved and the consciousness of the culture teaching strengthened, the knowledge of the Chinese culture deepened, will they have the will, the ability, and the power to increase the input of Chinese culture in college English teaching. The teaching content of Chinese culture should not be limited to a general introduction. It should be based on the understanding of the basic characteristics of Chinese culture to deeply analyze the internal structure and spirit of Chinese traditional culture, and attract the students to inherit the traditional culture. At the same time, the test and examination should also increase the share of Chinese culture, so as to arouse students’ attention to Chinese culture and improve their enthusiasm for learning Chinese culture.
Conclusion

The successful cross-cultural communication should be a two-way and equal exchange of the target language culture and the native language culture. This paper integrates the Chinese culture, which has been neglected all the time, into English teaching so as to improve the level of students’ English expression of Chinese culture, change the disadvantages of Chinese English education which pays too much attention to English culture learning and neglects the introduction of Chinese culture, change the weak position of Chinese culture in intercultural communication, and solve the problem of aphasia in Chinese culture. Today, with the continuous improvement of internationalization and localization of English, in the era of multicultural context, the study of localization of English and the introduction of local culture in English teaching are of urgent and important significance. This is a highly consistent understanding of both foreign and domestic research, and has become the forefront and hot spot of cultural teaching research. This paper puts forward a multi-faceted solution from the aspects of policy formulation, implementation at the national, university, and teacher levels, in order to arouse the attention and effective implementation of Chinese culture teaching, strengthen the enthusiasm of teaching and learning, and truly realize the two-way, equal, and effective exchange of cultures between the countries.

Further Suggestions

The study in this thesis is a basic attempt to construct conceptual frameworks and instructional models of Chinese culture teaching in college English teaching for the Chinese students. So much work still needs to be done to lay the ground for the further studies in this field. There are some suggestions for the better implementation of Chinese culture teaching in English:

Firstly, to improve the English teachers’ qualities for Chinese culture courses, self-improvement is indispensable and training programs should be held continuously. The cultivation should cope with their deficiencies of basic knowledge of Chinese culture and correct corresponding English expressions of Chinese culture. Besides, it should also aim at developing teachers’ analytical competence to compare Chinese culture with western culture and fostering their right attitudes towards the coexistence of multiple cultures.

Secondly, the education instructors should try to explore appropriate approaches or create enough opportunities to achieve the best teaching effects according to the educational context flexibly. For instance, “connecting Chinese culture with the present hot topics” (Wu, 2008) can be effective ways for Chinese culture instruction. For example, the introduction of TCM can be connected with the natural healing ideas which are popular among the westerners.

References