

Exploration & Analysis of Intercultural Communication Ability Cultivation in College English Teaching

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Abstract

Currently English is the common language in the world. This is not only because that English is simple and easy to learn, but also because that the strong economies of UK and US has made English a worldwide language. So a person must understand the language and culture of a foreign country at the economic stage in order to avoid language conflicts, conclude agreements, and promote economic development of both parties. However, college English teaching in China gives excessive attention to grammar analysis by neglecting the improvement of students' English cultural attainments, causing most students failure in intercultural exchanges. This affects China and other countries in establishing friendly relationship, which is bad to promote the economic development of China.

Key words: College English teaching; Intercultural communications; Ability cultivation

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INTRODUCTION

British and American economic promotion together with the features of English (simple and easy to learn) enabled English to be a universal language in the world. People may have exchanges and discuss economic development trends through the use of English. They should also be familiar with the languages and the cultures of the

countries involved so as to avoid cultural conflicts which may have impact on the relationship of the two parties during the process of exchanges. English teaching in some peculiar colleges in China is lacking of the practicability. The smattering English students learn in colleges cannot make them understand either the language or the culture while they are learning English. When they are engaged in intercultural exchanges, their poor knowledge will lead to the embarrassment of both parties, which is not good for smooth exchanges. In order to achieve the friendly exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries, we need to enhance the cultivation of intercultural communication ability in college English teaching so that China may establish friendly and cooperative relationship with other countries and finally promote China's economic development and progress.

1. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ABILITY OVERVIEW

1.1 Features & Classifications of Culture

1.1.1 Features of Culture

A culture is the excellent experience accumulated by people of different nations during production and living. Represents the likes and dislikes of a nation, it brooks not damage from other people. It exists in people's mind and makes people live in good harmony with the environment. It also makes us feel its charm while protecting the nature. A culture is owned by all the members of a nation. Anyone of a nation may learn and carry it on so that his descendants can live in a superior cultural environment, and his nation is more attractive and go forward.

1.1.2 Classifications of Culture

Different nations have created various cultures in the process of production and living from the primitive society till now. Next the author will introduce two different classification methods of culture. The first one is to divide

the culture into discipline culture and psychological behavior culture. The discipline culture mainly contains biology, geography, politics, history, and arts, etc. The psychological behavior culture may improve people's psychological diathesis and regulate people's day-to-day actions. The second method is to split the culture into information culture, behavior culture, and achievement culture. The information culture is primarily composed of history, geography, biology, politics and economics which we have contact in routine learning. The main contents of the behavior culture are to regulate people's daily deeds. The achievement culture chiefly refers to the achievement people have made in literature and arts.

1.2 Concept and Elements of Communication

The word "communication" we are using in our daily life comes from Latin, which means "co-ownership". As an activity, communication helps people to express the meaning they wish to convey to the other side. The communication activities are influenced by a number of elements, mainly of which are the national cultures of the communication parties and their thinking. Sometimes communication occurs naturally, and sometimes it is affected by the target it wishes to get.

There are many elements in communication, including the talking contents of both parties, the subjects for information transference, the integration of and the understanding to the information, the exchange methods, and the additional contents for exchanges. All these elements will have impact to the communication processes. Both parties for exchanges must choose correct exchange methods and proper contents together with the use of humorous words if they are intending to accomplish the task of communications. Then they may attract the attention of the other side in order to establish friendly relationship and promote social and economic development.

1.3 Implications of Intercultural Communication Ability

Different scholars give different meanings to the intercultural communication ability. Here we will focus on the introduction of Reuben's understanding. According to Reuben, the intercultural communication ability refers to the wording activity ability that the people engaged in exchanges must have in order to realize the purpose of communication. Both parties need to express to the other side their communicative intentions and should not give radical comments to other people's actions during the intercultural communications. In order to make smooth communications, they also need to carefully observe the other side's communication methods with the aim of catering to the other side's preferences, establishing good friendship, and finally facilitate the conclusion of agreements. Moreover, both parties need to give transpositional considerations to try to figure out the other side's ideas and choose the best strategic program.

2. REASONS FOR CULTIVATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ABILITIES OF STUDENTS IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

2.1 No Separation of Language Exchanges From Cultural Elements

Our day-to-day exchanges are marked with our own national cultural features more or less. We must have good knowledge of local national cultural features if we wish to use authentic words for exchanges. In this way, we will be aware what we would say at what time and under what circumstances. We can also use some local national allusions to heighten the atmosphere of exchanges in order to make the people of the other party feel relaxed and avoid national culture conflicts, which may result in exchange failures. Such failures are not good for both parties to build friendly relationship since they cannot contribute to the economic cooperation of both parties and cause serious losses to the national economy.

2.2 Requirements to College English Teaching

We must learn the world common language --- English as the international trading activities are increasing. In order to achieve this purpose, we must adopt foreign national cultures while learning English so that the students may use authentic English for exchanges. According to *College English Curriculum Requirements*, colleges and universities must work hard to improve students' abilities of listening, speaking, reading and writing. They should also properly enhance the students' cultural awareness in order that they have sufficient knowledge for international exchanges. In addition, college English teachers need to advance the students' communication abilities in the process of teaching. Only in this way can the students, when they step into the society, take advantage of their communication abilities for international exchanges based on other countries' national cultures, establish friendly and cooperative relationship with other countries, and promote economic cooperation and development.

2.3 Cultural Accomplishments Determining People's Communication Effects

An American linguist deems that the communication ability is influenced by the grammaticality, the appropriateness, and the reality of words. The most important one among them is appropriateness. Different social cultures determine different word using rules. The communicative parties will become upset once they are exposed to the methods which conflict with their own wording rules. This is not favorable to good communications. More seriously, it would affect the sentiments of both parties and is to the disadvantage of subsequent exchanges. Neither party would benefit from the communications if an agreement fails to be concluded.

2.4 Status Quo of College Students' Communication Abilities in English

College teachers blindly impart English grammar knowledge to students when they are giving lesson. The dull and humor-absent lecturing is unable to provide students with a relaxed environment for English study. Furthermore, the teachers are lacking in the ability to pass on English communication ability to the students during teaching. They cannot offer at the same time a platform for English exchanges, giving rise to the phenomenon that the comprehensive English levels are universally low among college students. Being short of courage for long-term communications while meeting foreigners, the students are unqualified for international exchanges.

2.5 Far-Reaching Influence of Intercultural Communication Ability

There has been increasingly more international trading in the world with the constant economic development. Because English is simple and easy to learn, we must use English—the common language worldwide for economic exchanges during international trades in order to complete the communications successfully. Zhou Enlai, our former Premier, conquered all the participants present in the room with his fluent and authentic English when attending a WTO meeting. This is because that Premier Zhou Enlai used to have deep understanding of the languages and cultures of the participating countries when he was learning English. That's why he could attract the admirations of the participants, showed his demeanor as a premier and added luster to our country. This example tells us that we have to train the intercultural communication abilities of college students for the purpose of winning the respect of other countries, establishing good relationships on coordination and cooperation, and promoting the development of our national economy.

3. METHODS ON CULTIVATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ABILITIES IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

3.1 Teachers Making Good Preparations for Lessons and Providing Abundant Cultural Materials of Foreign Countries

First, college English teachers must be aware of the role of training the students' communication abilities. Then they can provide rich cultural materials of relevant countries when they are preparing the lessons. These materials should be accurate and attractive enough to catch the students' attention. They should help students to learn English while understanding the cultures and knowledge of other countries. In this way, the students will have ample cultural accomplishments, smoothly finish their

exchange tasks in English in the process of international communications. Furthermore, they will establish amicable relationships with the communicators from other countries, promote cooperation between both parties, and finally enhance China's economic development.

3.2 College English Teachers Reinforcing Students' Understanding to Cultures During Teaching

After giving accurate and sufficient international cultural information to college students, the teachers need to take some time and efforts to help students understand foreign cultures and customs. Special teaching and exercises will be given to the cultural differences which are closely related to day-to-day communications. At the same time, the teachers should consider the students' future occupations. Thus the students will not think that the relationship between language and culture is abstract, elusive, and hollow. The tight integration of cultural teaching and language communication will trigger the students' interest of learning both language and cultures and will generate the virtuous cycle effect. Of course, it's natural that the students will compare English and its culture with those of their nations. We should encourage them to take an equality attitude towards cultures and language. One the one hand, the students should not get above themselves and practice national centralism on their own language and culture. On the other hand, they should not adopt self-depreciation or even have the negative attitude towards our national culture by thinking that the cultures of English-speaking countries are superior to ours. The students may improve their abilities of English listening, speaking, reading and writing in the course of understanding foreign cultural customs. They will use their own intercultural communication abilities for exchanges, thereby complete communication tasks and promote China's economic development.

3.3 Giving Pertinent Comments to Cultural Differences Between China and the World

During the English teaching process, teachers will not give comments to the culture of a foreign country based on their own preferences. They should try to avoid exerting influence to the students' ideas. The students should have their own opinions in communications. When they are involved in international exchanges, they should be able to attract the attention of the people from the other party, facilitate the establishment of economic cooperation, and finally promote the economic development of our country. Let's take the US culture as an example. The United States was an agricultural society based on farms prior to the finish of the industrialization and urbanization. Its value at that time was Puritanism within the field of Protestant ethic. The main moral rule of Puritanism was to lay stress on unceasing hard work by standing against excessive hedonism and extravagance. However, this traditional

value and lifestyle was violently attacked with the development and achievement of industrialization. There came out the consumption idea of enjoying pleasures in good time. 1920s saw the beginning of modern lifestyle. A consumption morality emphasizing high consumptions and hedonism gradually became the dominating idea of the US society.

3.4 Teachers Helping Students Applying the Knowledge to Their Work Practice

Traditional English-teaching method only enables the students to have more written English knowledge. It does not tell them how to use it in their work. That's why the students cannot talk with foreigners after they get employed. So the teachers must help the students to put the knowledge they learn in colleges into practice so that they can be involved in communications successfully. For example, *The Widow* (New Horizon College English, Book 1, Unit 6) describes the recall of a widowed old woman about her wedding and married life. Through the story of an old woman, the article indicates to the readers the true essence of happy marital life. A teacher may, when teaching this lesson, ask the students to talk about what they think the most important thing in the life. The teacher should encourage their discussions or even arguments. In this way, the students not only learn knowledge, but also improve their abilities on English speaking and thinking.

3.5 Creating Application Situations for Teaching, Setting up Environment for English Teaching and Communications, and Reinforcing Students' Intercultural Communication Abilities

How to better enhance the students' intercultural communication abilities is a process requiring constant explorations. It cannot be done at one kick. It depends on various language knowledge points together with ceaseless intensification of cultural accomplishments. Teachers need to change their ideas in college English teaching. They should change the previously pure teaching mode, take less guiding role on classes, and reduce the time for lecturing step by step. Other teaching methods, such as problem settlement, case analysis and investigation, will also be adopted so that the students may speak freely at classes. Thus they will have better combination of knowledge and practical use. At the same time, teachers may design some beneficial communication activities based on actual needs. They may set up some specific situations for communication and create a good learning environment for the students. By doing this, the students will intensify their skills on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and reinforce their intercultural communication abilities from language practice.

CONCLUSION

Since the international economy is gradually get integrated, we need to take advantage of English—the global common language to realize economic exchanges and cooperation. English teaching in most colleges, however, lays emphasis only on grammatical knowledge instead of introducing both language habits and customs of English-speaking countries. This leads to the fact that college students do not pay attention to their English-using methods at the beginning stepping into the society. The language and cultural conflicts will make both parties in an embarrassed situation, which goes against establishing friendly cooperative relationship. Therefore, we must enhance the cultivation of intercultural communication abilities in college English teaching. In short, with frequent exchanges between people of different cultural backgrounds, intercultural communication competence is increasingly important. Therefore, the task of college English teaching is not only to pay attention to teach the students to learn the language and the use of language skills training, but also to strengthen students' cross-cultural awareness. Only by so doing, two sides in intercultural communication can reduce their misunderstandings and conflicts due to their different cultural backgrounds. Both sides in intercultural communication can take a positive and tolerant attitude to eliminate misunderstanding and achieve a smooth and pleasant communication. Facts have proved that only the language teaching and culture teaching organically combine together can ultimately achieve the aim of foreign language teaching and train more cross-cultural talents with multiple cultural awareness.

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