Research on Acculturation in College English Teaching

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Abstract: This article explains the situation of acculturation and makes an analysis of how to introduce culture in college English teaching. Professors use multimedia to introduce culture in a vivid and compelling way. As a result, professors will cultivate students into well-rounded and educated people who understand the essence of culture.

Introduction

Language is a carrier of culture and culture affects language as well. Therefore, language and culture can’t be separable. English as a foreign language has its own culture. How to teach students English culture in class has become an urgent task for many English professors. With awareness of cultivating students’ intercultural communication competence becoming increasingly intense, college attaches great importance to teach students culture. Brumberg once said, “Cultivating students who only know language but don’t know culture equals to train some idiots who can speak fluent foreign language.”

Situation of Acculturation in College English Teaching

At the present phase of Chinese education, college English teaching in our country still tends to give priority to language knowledge but ignores cultural knowledge. There are endless of phenomenon that students fail to deal with intercultural relationship because they misunderstand culture due to their own culture deficiency. A report on a foreign teacher’s class in a college shows that a majority of students use too much Chinglish when they talk with the foreign teacher. It indicates that those students are poor in logical and critical thinking of English. In addition, students are deficit in learning English and American cultural background knowledge which results in cultural shocks between students and foreign teachers. So atmosphere of the whole English class can’t reach the best status. A lot of examples show that currently speaking, students’ proficiency in culture is still far behind their proficiency in language. With the rapid integration of the global world, intercultural communication must be an inevitable tendency. Thus, cultivation of more intercultural communicators has been a crucial task. In the past time, English teaching just makes some differences in solving the problem that students can’t speak English and only pays attention to improve students’ ability of having practical conversations and listening. However, according to syllabus of the latest college English teaching, students are required to develop certain ability to learn culture which is an important point in the reform of teaching. In addition, some colleges based on English teaching syllabus have referred some requirements to train students’ cultural quality and intercultural communication ability. Therefore, professors need to conform to these requirements. After a very long time, students can avoid failing to make mistakes in intercultural activities. So we can see that integration of cultural elements and teaching syllabus of college English not only meets the requirement of language teaching but also trains students’ qualities of culture.
Content of Acculturation in College English Teaching

Different nations have different cultures, so meanings of cultures are different. While teaching the culture of a target country, professors should lead students to understand what that culture is at first. Due to complexity and diversity of culture its own, professors can introduce culture based on various teaching aims and demands of learners. Now, we decide to make discussions from two aspects of definition and usage of culture. Firstly, definition of culture generally refers to background information of politics, economy, history, geography and science and so forth used in daily practical communication. This background information can’t have a direct influence on accuracy of message delivery. Nevertheless, culture has an effect on message delivery in communication. Those effects are embodied in greetings, slangs and body languages and so on. As a result, introducing culture should not only teach culture but also let students understand the inner content of culture. From superficial aspect, culture forms people’s behavior. But from the essence, cultural psychology forms people’s behavior. People come from different cultural backgrounds will develop into different cultural psychologies that can be presented in many aspects. Take a real thing as an example, when the American president Jimmy Carter met President Torrios of Panama, the latter one came to embrace the former one for reason that nothing more than embrace in Panama culture could express the meaning of value for visitors. However, Americans don’t accept etiquette of embracing between two people when they meet together. Embrace is thought to invade personal space. From this time, relationship between America and Panama is not very steady and even Americans couldn’t keep the canal there. The bulk of scholars express their own points of view in terms of how to teach culture with consideration of customs of society, mode of thinking and environment of living. We can make a summary at the current that four important factors are included in content of teaching culture. Historical background of target country comes the first and is followed by customs of target country. The next one is social language practice and the last one is body language culture. All in all, cultural psychology can’t be formed in one day or one night. Professors could be conscious of cultivating students in a good teaching environment. What professors should do is to add students’ sensitivity for English culture and train them to deal with culture differences in a flexible way in order to improve students’ comprehensive capacity of using English language.

Principles of Acculturation in College English Teaching

Firstly, integration principle should be obeyed. Separated or individual cultural phenomenon will not be explained vividly without being integrated. Professors will be overshadowed by trivial things if they only pay attention to specific cultural content. Instead of doing this, professors should focus on improve students’ understanding of basic characteristics that English culture has. This integrated culture is diverse, colorful and stratified. In the process of teaching, professors try to cultivate students’ logic of English which will help them to know culture better. Secondly, principle of openness should also be mentioned. It’s common to keep the attitude of openness in class. In terms of culture, students can learn a lot from various aspects such as literature, science, history, art, philosophy and customs. In the form of teaching, various and flexible methods can be adopted. The openness to those aspects will help students form ability of adapting to culture and even develop students’ good feelings about the English culture. Because culture is rich and extensive, it will cost students’ a lot of time to learn culture. Thirdly, progressive principle is also an important factor. Culture contains lots of meanings. It’s profound and delicate. In daily life, many aspects reflect culture. One’s behavior and life styles can reflect what kind of culture he is living with. It's not the same as study of language. Students may spend some time on language learning before they take examinations. However, it will spend a lot of time to learn culture. So it is a quite difficult and long process to form cultural consciousness. Students can acquire knowledge through thinking and understanding in daily life and study. Long time of accumulation can make great differences. This way of teaching may affect students on psychology. In consequence, English can have a deep impression on students. Therefore, cultivation of culture awareness should be formed step by step.
Fourthly, applicability principle is sure to be included. While introducing culture, professors should focus on culture that will influence on information delivery. If students put what they have learnt into practice after they learn culture, they will be attracted and eager to learn culture. However, culture is not all of language teaching which still takes language as the main thing and culture as auxiliary thing. So too much teaching of culture can’t promote language teaching and even become an obstruction on students’ way of learning. In conclusion, professors can introduce culture within a fixed framework of language teaching. The aim is to provide service for language teaching and promotes development of students’ comprehensive ability. Finally, objectivity principle is also an important factor. Accuracy and objectivity are the cornerstones of introducing culture. Objectivity is beneficial to improve students’ awareness of equality and lead students to absorb two cultures in a critical way. At the same time, Chinese profound and extensive culture can even be shown to the world in a vivid and proper view. This will be attributed to intercultural communication.

**Methods of Acculturation in College English Teaching**

College English teaching mainly includes analysis of students’ demand of study, teaching aims, teaching process and teaching strategies. In order to solve the problem of cultural lag, professors should update their insights of teaching and take effective measures with a purposeful and planned attitude to involve culture in the whole English teaching system. Based on study of students, professors, syllabus, textbooks and content of teaching, professors gradually train students. Then, professors will turn abstract knowledge into practical use in intercultural communication. At first, time in class is not enough to deliver culture so professors could encourage students to make use of the internet to deepen understanding what they have learnt. This method reduces time that teachers use and also avoids rote learning to tremendously help students absorb in culture. In addition, the way of using scrappy time to learn will also relieve students’ burden and acquire the content that they have learnt. Then, teacher-centered teaching way has been out of date. So we have to use new strategies because they will be better choices. It makes sense that through contrast between Chinese and western cultures will ask students to better understand the western culture. There are similarities and differences between Chinese and western cultures. Therefore, we can compare and contrast these two cultures from some aspects. For an instance, Chinese and western cultures of food have a similarity that people must wear formal dress in important and distinguished situations instead of wearing casual clothes. Besides, some certain positions are provided for important or distinguished elderly people. Chinese and western cultures of food have a difference that Chinese people use chopsticks carry food but western people use knives and forks to cut food. Through contrast between Chinese and western elements, students will better understand content of the culture. This has become effective methods for teachers to introduce culture in daily life. In the future, with the improvement of information equipment, professors can make use of multimedia to introduce culture. Novel ways should be used when professors teach content of culture. For example, the content of culture can involve English movie and video materials, novels, music and so on. It will make whole class rich and colorful. The content of culture can be presented by PPT, pictures, media players of videos and audios, etc. In a summary, the whole process will be vivid, visual and specific. At last, class should put students in center. Professors lead and encourage students to read abundant English and American novels of literature and English journals and magazines. Then, students will focus on current events and keep pace with the times. After that, students are able to develop their own ability of gaining information and pay more attention to understand English culture and broaden their horizons in their spare time. In addition, professors should also encourage students to communicate with English native speakers in order to deeply understand English culture. That will be a relaxed and happy way to learn for students. At the same time, professors increase some Chinese culture in English class to some extent in order to help students understand Chinese and western cultures at the same pace. However, it is not realistic to learn everything in class as we have mentioned before. Students must use their spare time to complement cultural knowledge. Professors even can use Wechat and QQ to recommend some useful materials of English culture and sometimes explain to students some English cultural
knowledge that is closely related to their daily life. So, students will be aroused interests in English culture. Because the methods of introducing culture are out of date to some extent, professors even can get some new visions and produce more original understanding of culture based on using multimedia and some other new ways. Last but not the least, professors can find related and useful content of culture in the text and introduce it to students. It can strengthen students’ background knowledge. Vocabularies are also important and professors can explore their inner meanings because they carry a lot cultural elements. So when professors explain the meanings of vocabularies, they should explain the cultural meanings as well. This method will enrich students’ knowledge of culture. Of course students can’t only focus on learning spelling of the vocabularies but should pay more attention on the value of culture, living customs, historical elements, religions and beliefs. For the reason that vocabularies are too superficial but their inner meanings are the real and deep reflect of the culture.

Problems of Acculturation in College English Teaching

In current college English class, there still are some problems about acculturation. In the first place, due to limited time in class, professors may not have enough time to explain the culture. This will result in students’ deficiency in cultural understanding. In class, time of teaching language knowledge and culture should be allocated in according to a certain proportion. Otherwise, it will be not beneficial to deepen students’ understanding of culture for professors always teach language knowledge but neglect essence of the culture. In doing so, students’ language learning will not be affected by lacking of culture knowledge. In the second place, some content of acculturation do not have any relation to text that will be learned in class. So the content is not practical and useful. This is difficult to arouse students’ interests in learning, so students can’t use what they have learned in class. Acculturation should produce great effectiveness. Therefore, students should be encouraged to explore and discuss culture independently in consequent students will develop critically thinking. If students only depend on teachers, learning will not produce any effect because there are not interaction and communication between teachers and students. Students will not learn too well that result in students’ inferior cultural consciousness. Besides, college professors’ consciousness of introducing culture is weak because they only pay attention to cultivate students’ language ability but ignore to develop students’ comprehensive ability of using language by providing environment to learn language. In short, college professors must enlarge their own cultural knowledge and improve their cultural consciousness. If professors can’t balance their own culture and English culture, they are unable to properly teach students’ cultural background. In this way, professors have no method but know differences between Chinese and western cultures that they will digest those cultures and finally realize cultural acculturation. In addition, now professors at college don’t use flexible methods of introducing culture. However, there are a lot of ways to introduce culture such as translation, listening and speaking and interactive communication. Every method is like a sword for every method has its own advantages and disadvantages. The multiple teaching methods will bring students better feelings. Last but not the least, there are a few of books that introduce Chinese culture in English. College only provides English books with culture of English countries. However, Chinese culture as western culture equal is an indeed fact. More and more westerners take increasingly interests in Chinese culture. Therefore, it is a good chance to introduce our culture to the outside world. College students are tending to shoulder the responsibility of introducing Chinese culture through intercultural communication. However, to express Chinese culture in English is a shortcoming of those who not major in English and it becomes a dead zone in college education. To solve the problem, professors should recommend proper materials to students and encourage them to read as extracurricular practice done by them.

Summary

It is inevitable to introduce culture in college English class. As we all know, culture is dynamic and tolerant. Thus, introducing culture in college English class should hold an attitude of openness
and development. This is a requirement for professors to improve their cultural qualities. In that premise, professors can use effective methods to penetrate culture to students. Consequently, professors should shoulder the responsibility of training students’ cultural consciousness and building a bridge of cultural communication between two countries. The final aim is to train students who can have communication with people under different cultural backgrounds. In summary, acculturation is an important point in college English teaching and occupies a top position in English learning. Students will have a more vivid point of view to understand English culture and study English in a western logic. Students also will experience foreign culture and feel it with an enjoyable mood. This will help students comfortable in intercultural communication which greatly improve students’ study. Therefore, professors should put culture introduction as top priority and obey those principles that just mentioned. At the same time, the ideal professors should be proficient in language and culture. In addition, they must have a flexible reaction to society and always keep pace with the times. Finally, there must be a great effectiveness. In the end, versatile talents with proficiency in English are what our society needs in the future.

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