

On Integration of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture into College English Teaching

Jianing Niu

*School of Foreign Languages, Dalian Jiaotong University, Dalian 116000, China
joyniu1981@163.com*

ABSTRACT. *Language and culture are closely correlated to each other and college English is supposed to be a course that covers both the language skills and the transmission of culture. Besides, cultural learning should not only be confined to the culture of the target language as it is important to integrate the culture of the native language. However, Chinese excellent traditional culture is unbalanced or even missing in college English teaching activities, aptly described as “Chinese cultural aphasia”, which is not conducive to the cultivation of students’ cross-cultural competence. This article analyzes the reasons for the lack of Chinese traditional culture in college English teaching, points out the importance of integrating Chinese traditional culture into college English teaching, and proposes specific and practical ways to promote integration.*

KEYWORDS: *College English Teaching, Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture, Integration*

1. Introduction

Culture is the soul of a nation, and boosting cultural soft power can enhance the country’s international competitiveness and national self-confidence. China is the only country in the world with a history of civilization for five thousand years. The extensive and profound Chinese excellent traditional culture is the firm base and special strengths of our cultural confidence. The introduction and dissemination of Chinese excellent traditional culture can not only carry forward the splendid history of civilization, increase national pride and national cohesion, but also deepen the understanding of China from countries along the Belt and Road, and lay a solid foundation for in-depth integration in other fields.

Language is the most important communication tool and information embodiment for human beings. As a language subject, college English also plays the role of cross-cultural communication, which is never a one-way process. But unfortunately, for a long time in college English teaching, Chinese teachers have focused more on language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as western cultures such as the humanities and geography of English-speaking countries, thereby having ignored China’s extensive and profound traditional culture. As a result, many Chinese students are unable to accurately and fluently introduce China’s excellent traditional culture in English when communicating with foreign friends. Many scholars call this phenomenon “Chinese cultural aphasia”, which was first proposed in 2000 by professor Congcong [1] of Nanjing University in the *Guangming Daily* and has attracted great attention and recognition in the English education domain.

2. Reasons for Chinese Cultural Aphasia

2.1 *The Imbalance of Chinese and Western Culture in Teaching Materials*

For a long time, most English textbooks have focused on western politics, economics, and cultural life, with little or no interpretation of Chinese excellent traditional culture. Even if occasionally there are certain Chinese characters in the passage, they are still scenes of overseas students in the English-speaking countries. It is true that students should pay attention to their ability to express themselves in English. However, from the perspective of cultivating students’ cross-cultural communication skills, such learning content can only make students better absorb and accept the western culture and serves no useful purposes for the expression and output of Chinese native traditional culture.

2.2 Exam-oriented Evaluation System

There is no denying that university education has gradually begun to pay attention to students' personal development and their innovative ability in learning. However, students' grasp of a subject is mainly evaluated through an integrated test, which has led many students to focus on test results rather than personal communication skills in learning English. For example, in most colleges and universities, college English teaching generally places too much emphasis on the CET-4, CET-6 or the final exam, thereby neglecting quality cultural education. As for the communication ability and communication methods of the language itself, most students have no time to pay attention. In fact, as a communication tool, the main purpose of English is to absorb and exchange different cultures in English. However, to a large extent, college English test-oriented education only make students care about how to pass the test quickly or how to get a scholarship instead of learning itself. As a result, some students are too lazy to study traditional culture, thinking that reading classics is a waste of time and energy. When they have time, they will choose fast food culture, binge-watching or browse Internet novels rather than reading books or articles related to Chinese culture.

3. Significance of Integrating Chinese Traditional Culture into English Teaching

3.1 Promote and Spread Chinese Traditional Culture

Chinese traditional culture has developed through the integration of civilizations for thousands of years. It not only contains the spiritual connotation of the Chinese people, but also carries the ideological value, moral sentiment, folk customs, religious beliefs, life habits and ways of thinking in other fields. In other words, Chinese culture has a long history, rich connotation, and distinctive national and contemporary characteristics. With the continuous improvement of our country's international status, the attention of Chinese culture in the world has gradually increased [2].

Many countries have developed a keen interest in the mysterious eastern culture, but they do not understand Chinese and do not know much about many cultural backgrounds. The opening of college English in universities not only provides a window for college students to understand the western world, but also a two-way channel for Chinese traditional culture to go global. Embedding Chinese traditional culture in college English courses has inestimable social significance for the positive promotion and dissemination of cultural identity. Contemporary college students undertake the important mission of telling Chinese stories well and spreading Chinese voice. Under this historical background, learning Chinese traditional culture and being able to use English to spread our cultural essence to all countries in the world is the effective way for our country to go global in an all-round way.

3.2 Improve College Students' Cross-Cultural Communication Skills and Cultivate Their Cultural Confidence

Language is the carrier of culture, but language does not only serve a certain culture. At present, most of the students' input in English learning is western culture, and the input of Chinese culture is not deep enough. However, in the process of cross-cultural communication, the essence of the communication between two languages is the exchange of two cultures. Both parties should conduct cross-cultural communication based on the principle of respecting cultural differences and promoting cultural harmony. Therefore, in English teaching, Chinese excellent culture and western culture should be organically combined, and cultural comparisons should be made in the teaching process to seek common ground while reserving differences.

As the elite class of society, college students shoulder the great responsibility of introducing China to the world and explaining traditional culture on the stage of the world in the cross-cultural communication. Their own cultural literacy not only represents the image of a person, but also represents the dignity and pride of the Chinese nation. Therefore, it matters that they have not only a solid language foundation, but also a deep cultural literacy and rich cultural knowledge of the native language. The college English cultural teaching should be devoted to cultivating college students' sense of pride in national culture, the conscious awareness of learning more about native culture, and a deep understanding and love of national culture.

4. Strategies to Integrate Chinese Traditional Culture into College English Teaching

4.1 Improve the Teaching Syllabus And Examination Mode Of College English

First of all, improving the teaching syllabus of college English has become the key as the syllabus is the basic guarantee for the implementation of educational ideas and teaching plans, as well as an important basis for the school's construction of teaching materials and the assessment of teaching quality. In addition to covering the original knowledge and abilities, the syllabus should also list the scope, content, vocabulary, values, and the correct English expressions related to the excellent traditional Chinese culture. Secondly, the college English test, which is used to test students' academic achievement, should also be reformed in content and form. The College English Test is a guideline for college students to learn. Therefore, the content of various college English tests can add the examination of Chinese traditional cultural elements. In other words, the evaluation method should be diversified to guide students establish a more correct learning direction, cultivate their communication skills, and actively spread Chinese excellent traditional culture in various places in the future.

4.2 Strengthen the construction of English textbooks and integrate Chinese traditional cultural elements

The training content of college English mainly comes from the textbook itself, so the reform of the textbook directly determines the students' absorption and recognition of traditional Chinese culture in the learning process. For a long time, the content of English textbooks mainly tends to introduce the folk customs and historical allusions of western countries. It is true that students' horizons have been broadened. However, to establish the correct values and outlooks of the world is based on cultivating a sense of pride in national culture. Therefore, increasing the proportion of traditional Chinese culture in college English is the primary condition for students to correctly output their culture in the future [3].

First of all, each unit of the textbook can be specially set up for special columns Chinese culture, selecting some Chinese history, geography, economy, culture and other aspects for introduction. Secondly, it can also include hot issues and international situations that are closely related to students' life so as to stimulate their learning initiative and allow students to carry out cultural output with a sense of national pride in cross-cultural exchanges. Thirdly, when integrating excellent Chinese culture into college English textbooks, we must pay attention to the contrast and similarities of Chinese and western cultures, and take into account the balance between the two cultures. It is important to guarantee the cultivation of English competence as well as establishing the cultural confidence through effective teaching.

4.3 Enhance teachers' overall quality and seek comparative teaching methods

The level of teacher's personal quality determines the depth and breadth of students' learning. Embedding traditional Chinese culture in college English classrooms is an exchange and fusion of two different cultures, which requires teachers to have a certain degree of understanding and research on both cultural backgrounds. Through culture-contrast teaching, students often improve their ability to express their own culture in English and improve their ability to communicate across cultures [4]. For example, when talking about Western festivals, such as Christmas, Halloween, and Valentine's Day, teachers can appropriately introduce traditional Chinese festivals in the classroom, such as the Chinese Valentine's Day, Dragon Boat Festival, Spring Festival, etc. At the same time, they can teach some useful and accurate expressions about the specific customs of each festival in English, which enables students to have a deeper understanding of the Chinese and Western cultural characteristics behind the festivals. In addition, comparative teaching in the fields of film, music, technology, and art can also be carried out to integrate traditional Chinese culture and enrich the teaching content.

For instance, Pixar's animated work CoCo has achieved great success. The audience generally thinks that the cultural customs conveyed in it are full of humanistic atmosphere. In fact, China's Tomb-sweeping Day, Mexico's Day of the Dead and Western Halloween all have something in common, because all mankind has a similar custom of missing and commemorating the dead family members. In fact, the festival in our country has a longer history to trace back. But it is just such an English movie from Hollywood with well-designed animation and storyline that won the recognition of the world. Therefore, how to enable the younger generation to fully grasp the essence of traditional

culture and to carry out innovative output in line with the characteristics of the globalized era is particularly important.

4.4 Cultivate students' cultural learning awareness and expand diversified ways for learning

The setting of college English courses should not simply focus on language learning and communication, but should also focus on the simultaneous cultivation and internalization of humanistic qualities. In the teaching process, teachers should strengthen students' extracurricular reading, and enhance students' sense of national identity by offering different traditional cultural courses. In order to be in an equal position in the future exchanges of different languages and cultures, we will continue to increase students' knowledge base. Through extensive extracurricular reading and the exchange of information in two different languages, students can also get more inspiration in the process of comparison.

Learning should not be confined to the classroom. English extracurricular activities are also an important channel to spread Chinese traditional culture. Students should be encouraged to participate in some activities with traditional cultural themes, like speech contests, idiom contests, poetry appreciation, calligraphy and painting exhibitions, or traditional costume displays or designs. These can expand students' knowledge of traditional Chinese culture. After all, the preparation phase is the process of students' in-depth study of Chinese traditional culture. In the follow-up exchanges, students can naturally express it in English and spread it to more people, so as to tell Chinese stories well and spread Chinese voice.

5. Conclusion

In view of the Chinese cultural aphasia, it is of great significance to integrate traditional Chinese culture into college English teaching. As an important subject for colleges and universities to train social talents, college English not only undertakes the task of knowledge dissemination and skills training, but also shoulders the sacred mission of making Chinese traditional culture go global. By adhering to the basic principle of respecting cultural differences and promoting cultural harmony, it is necessary to improve college English teachers' cultural literacy and add the essence of Chinese traditional culture to college English textbooks, which helps cultivate student's cross-cultural ability and spread the excellent traditional Chinese culture.

References

- [1] Cong Cong (2000). Chinese culture aphasia: defects of English teaching China [N]. Guangming Daily.
- [2] Aixia, Liu (2018). On the embedding and inheritance of traditional culture in college English courses. *Comparative Research on Cultural Innovation*, vol.36, no.2, p.88-89.
- [3] Min Guo (2014). The necessity of integrating Chinese culture into college English teaching and the corresponding strategies. *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University*, no.11, p.135-137.
- [4] Qian Li and Xiao Sun (2015). The integration of Chinese traditional culture in college English teaching. *Journal of Xinxiang University*, no.2, p.207-209.