

Study on How to Interpret China's Stories in English Class during Primary Education

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Abstract: *Interpreting China's stories well is conducive to manifesting its cultural soft power, enhancing its cultural competitiveness and national power, thus improving its international status. To do so can strengthen cultural exchanges between China and other countries, enhance their mutual understanding, promote Chinese culture to the world, enhance the attractiveness and influence of Chinese culture in the international arena, and establish a good image of China in the world. It is also conducive to demonstrating the unique charm of Chinese culture, enhancing cultural self-awareness and cultural confidence, and firmly taking the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Telling stories of China in English Class during primary education is crucial to the development both for students and for our country. To tell good stories of China in English class, we need to extend the culture, to extend the stories, to incorporate the current events and to integrate with other subjects.*

Keywords: *Tell Stories of China, English Class, Interpretation*

1. Introduction

Primary education usually refers to the first stage of a country's school system, also known as primary education, and is generally aimed at children aged 6 - 12. It is the basic education, the education of basic general cultural knowledge for all citizens, the education to cultivate the basic quality of citizens. How can English curriculum and English class help students in terms of their basic quality of citizens? English curriculum and English class should help students to enhance their understanding of Chinese culture, enhance their patriotic feelings, strengthen their cultural confidence and build the sound view about the world, the life and values. It should help students to build excellent moral character and master abilities to communicate cross-culturally and to make traditional Chinese culture known to all.

To begin with, we should bear in mind how to interpret stories of China in English class. Interpretation of stories of China in English Class implies that traditional Chinese culture should be integrated into English class. Traditional Chinese culture is the spiritual and material cultural wealth of literature, art, education and science that has been passed down from generation to generation during the thousands of years of social development of the Chinese people. With the widespread use of Internet technology and easy-to-use cell phones, people can enjoy exotic flavors and learn about the rich and colorful cultures around the world without leaving home. Various forms of international exchanges, such as trade fairs, economic and trade expositions, world fairs and even the Olympic Games, are more likely to subconsciously spread traditional Chinese culture to the outside world. At present, international exchanges are getting closer and closer, and people's footprints can spread all over the global village. Traditional Chinese culture is a record of the wisdom of the Chinese nation and the dialogue between heaven, earth and man over time. The most representative ones are the tangible historical relics and cultural relics, and the intangible Chinese traditional festivals. The excellent traditional Chinese culture is the valuable spiritual wealth of the Chinese nation for thousands of years and must continue to be passed on. Traditional culture is a living heritage that permeates the blood, is carried by people, and is people-oriented. It is generated and transmitted by people. As the citizens of the future society, the leaders of tomorrow, students undoubtedly shoulder the responsibility to learn about the traditional Chinese culture and make Chinese culture known to the whole world. The Party Central Committee has always worked to make this happen in order to further enhance China's international status. The Party Central Committee has always attached great importance to foreign propaganda work. After the 18th Party Congress, the slogan of "telling the story of China" has been repeatedly mentioned. Telling the story of China is a new way to lead international communication and foreign propaganda. The Chinese government has always attached great importance to foreign propaganda work. Telling stories of China matters to China's national image and its international influence. It is also conducive to enhancing

China's international influence. In addition, it is also conducive to eliminating international misunderstandings and explaining China to the world, building a discourse system and enhancing cultural soft power; and summarizing development experience and strengthening the "four self-confidence". In order to tell a good Chinese story, it is necessary to: use quotations and allusions to highlight the cultural heritage; to incorporate personal experiences to add real feelings; to use easy-to-understand language and stories that are easy to understand.

What are stories of China? Stories of China refer to stories with Chinese features, including the traditional cultural stories and the stories with the spirit of the times, such as fable stories which common people are familiar with, or historical stories which advocate traditional virtues, mythological stories, stories introducing Chinese arts, traditions, or feats. During basic education in the elementary school, various forms can be put into use regarding Chinese stories. Picture books, cartoons, poems, movie clips are all welcomed by children. These could be part of the classroom teaching, and also the teaching content for the whole class, or the extension of the classroom teaching. The most important is to make the English class an efficient class. Efficient class has become popular ever since 2001. What is efficient class? It means maximizing the efficiency of the class and optimizing the benefits of the class. The key to efficient class is to centering around the students and to put pleasure as the top priority. The core idea is self-motivation, cooperation and exploration.^[1] The most ideal teaching method originates from the class. It is essential for teachers to motivate students and to make the class alive. Students take the initiative and show their innovation. Thus, the class will always be students' class and students are the one who practice in class. But how?

2. Interpretation of Stories of China in English Class

2.1 Extension of the Culture

In the English textbook one of the Sixth Grade in Fuzhou, Unit 7 features Thanksgiving. Students then will learn about the dialogues on Thanksgiving, talking about the traditions of Thanksgiving. It is also suggested that similar festivals should be introduced to students. Take Tomb Sweeping Day or Double Ninth Day as an example. Tomb Sweeping Day, commonly known as visiting graves day, is one of the four traditional sacrificial festivals in China, a day for ancestor worship. In Han and some minority areas, people follow local customs, bring fruits, food, paper money and other items to the cemetery, place the offerings in the front of the grave, incinerate the paper money, add some new soil to the grave, then kowtow in front of the grave, and then pack up the offerings and go home. Teachers can interpret the festival by means of pictures or dialogues. Students can also be required to present the festivals in their own manner. When students can talk about the festivals in English, they will not only have a better command of English, but also have a better understanding of traditional Chinese culture. Thus, Chinese culture and western culture can be compared to allow student to better tell stories of China. Another example is Double Ninth Day.^[2] Double Ninth Day falls on the ninth day of September according to the lunar calendar. Also known as the Chongyang Festival, it is a traditional Han Chinese festival. The celebration of Chongyang Festival usually includes activities such as going out to enjoy the scenery, climbing high and far, viewing chrysanthemums, placing dogwoods everywhere, eating chongyang cakes and drinking chrysanthemum wine. Students may lack knowledge about this festival since not all people spend this festival. The teacher then should spend more time in integrating this festival with the English class.^[3]

2.2 Extension of the Stories

In the story time illustrated in English Book 2 of the sixth grade, there is a story entitled The Old Man and the Goldfish. It tells us the story of an old man and the goldfish. The wife of the old man is too greedy to be satisfied. She first asks for a new washtub, and then a new house, a palace and new clothes. Eventually she wants the goldfish to be her servant. At last she gets nothing but only to return to her normal life again. After reading this story, the teacher could also introduce another similar fable story entitled The Story of the Golden Axe and the Silver Axe^[4]. In this story, a poor young man accidentally drops his broken and old iron axe. The river god gives him the silver axe, and the gold axe, only to be refused by the young man saying these are not his axe. Thanks to his honesty, the river god gives the young man the gold and silver axe as a tribute to his honesty. The teacher can first introduce this story to students by means of pictures and props, and then ask students to tell the story in their own words, or to practice the role play in this story. The teacher then can guide students into discussion about how to control one's appetite. Through extension of stories, students can view the world with broader

perspectives and have a deeper understanding of the essence of the stories so that they can spread the stories of China easier and more accurately.

2.3 Incorporation of the Current Events

In Unit 3 Seeing a Doctor illustrated in English Book 2 of the sixth grade, students will learn such expressions as “I have a headache. I have a cold.” This is a unit concerning illness and seeing a doctor. Considering the current Covid-19 pandemic, the teacher can introduce to students the facts about the pandemic and the measure taken to deal with it. The Covid-19 pandemic has been through our life for 3 years and students have built a certain amount of vocabulary and understood a lot about this pandemic. When teachers illustrate the Covid-19 pandemic, students might feel familiar and have no much pressure learning all that. They will be very much motivated and take their initiative. They will get to understand how much effort China has put into the campaign against the Covid-19 pandemic and naturally their love for our country will be cultivated. How to keep healthy at home should also be informed. The COVID-19 pandemic means that many of us are staying at home and sitting down more than we usually do. It’s hard for a lot of us to do the sort of exercise we normally do. It’s even harder for people who don’t usually do a lot of physical exercise. But at a time like this, it’s very important for people of all ages and abilities to be as active as possible. Just taking a short break from sitting, by doing 3-4 minutes of light intensity physical movement, such as walking or stretching, will help ease muscles and improve blood circulation and muscle activity. Regular physical activity benefits both the body and mind. It can reduce high blood pressure, help manage weight and reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and various cancers - all conditions that can increase susceptibility to COVID-19. Regular physical activity can help give our days a routine and be a way to stay in contact with family and friends. It’s also good for our mental health - reducing the risk of depression, cognitive decline and delay the onset of dementia - and improve overall feelings. Our students need to be healthy both physically and mentally. That is why they need to be informed about all that during English class. That will be an excellent opportunity for them to keep themselves informed when using the English language. And in turn, they will be abler to tell stories of China on how Chinese people take care of themselves both physically and mentally faced up with Covid-19 pandemic.

2.4 Integration with Other Subjects

When the topic concerns about festival such as the New Year, the teacher can instruct students to make New Year cards and write down their best wishes for each other. When the topic comes to Mother’s Day, the students may be asked to make cards for their mothers to show their love for their mothers so that English class can also be turned into craft class. In the English textbook one of the sixth grade in Fuzhou, the topic of Unit 2 centers around physical exercises. The teacher can take the opportunity to gather students in the playground and do physical exercises together. Students can grasp the expressions and phrases about physical exercises quickly during their sports time. They can play games and have fun learning English expressions such as “running, long jump, basketball, football”. English class can also be turned into music class too. Students learn much better in learning English songs. In English teaching, music can also be integrated into the content of the subject, which can not only allow students to cultivate their emotions in music but also enhance their cultural taste. Thus, different subjects can be integrated to raise students’ interest in learning not only English but also other subjects which will bring them many benefits.

3. What We Can Do in Telling Stories of China

Teachers of English should establish a sense of Chinese culture and consciously improve their knowledge of Chinese culture. They should pay attention to the accumulation of Chinese cultural knowledge in their daily teaching and research, put into practice the enrichment of Chinese cultural knowledge reserves, read relevant books, explore the appropriate English expressions of Chinese culture, and integrate Chinese cultural knowledge into the teaching of English courses to realize the subtle influence of Chinese culture in English teaching. On the other hand, schools need to provide teachers of English with training related to the content of Chinese cultural knowledge, and encourage them to participate in it to enrich their knowledge of Chinese culture. Through training, teachers of English can systematically receive education on knowledge related to Chinese culture and form a self-contained cultural knowledge base, effectively addressing the disadvantage that teachers of English emphasize the study of English-speaking countries’ culture and neglect local culture. As teachers, they should strive to

increase their knowledge reserves. Not only do teachers need to strengthen the foundation of English culture, but they should also dabble in multiple subjects and learn as much as possible about each subject. Teachers can also integrate Chinese stories into English teaching from lesson plan design to implementation. Textbooks should also be updated and improved as soon as possible to include a section on introducing China well in English. Appropriate material should be selected to help teachers make better use of them to tell the Chinese story. Various platforms for telling the China story in English should be increased through the gradual effort made by the policy makers. A variety of user-friendly, easy-to-use platforms should be built to give teachers more channels to lead students in telling the Chinese story in English. Schools should also provide a variety of opportunities for students to practice and improve their skills through practical application. Schools and teachers can work together to design a variety of practical activities for students to tell Chinese stories in English and to create diverse opportunities for students to practice.

4. Conclusion

English education in China will pay more attention to training students to become citizens in the era of globalization and to be part of building a community of human destiny in the future. This not only reflects the value of English education, but also is the vision of English education development. Faced with this challenge and the fact that cultural self-awareness and cultural confidence should be enhanced, English class can also be made full use of to help strengthen cultural exchanges between China and other countries, to help enhance mutual understanding and to promote Chinese culture to the world.

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