On Cultivating Students' Intercultural Communication Ability in College English Teaching under the Background of Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract: The implement of belt and road initiative in the new period means that economic and cultural exchanges become much more frequent and going into the depth, which has brought both opportunities and challenges to universities' training foreign language brains equipped with intercultural communication ability. This paper, focusing on the current situation of college English teaching, has analyzed the problems existing in the cultivation of students' ability of intercultural communication in teaching occasions, and put forward feasible methods in response.

Keywords: College English teaching; Intercultural communication ability; Methods of training

1. Introduction

Belt and road initiative is a macroscopic strategy in China's opening up and development, aiming at promoting positive economic cooperation with countries along the route so as to co-found the symbiosis of shared interest, destiny and responsibility, making the countries along mutually trusting in the political sense, sharing economic development and culturally inclusive with one and another, which closely follows the developing trend of economic globalization and cultural diversification. With the continuous advancement of Belt and Road initiative, China is frequently and closely exchanging with countries of different cultures, which generates the requirement of more and more foreign language minds with intercultural communication ability. As college students are the major force in promoting the spread and exchange of cultures in the international community, it is of realistic sense to teach them how to deal with cultural shocks flexibly and inclusively in intercultural communication activities. With the new opportunities of development in the new background, college English teaching ought to attach more importance to the cultural essences beneath languages, establishing the position in the cultural sense, in order to actively explore a new mode of training college students' intercultural communication ability and work out more reasonable and concrete strategies of talent training.

2. Problems of the Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Ability in College English Teaching

2.1. Traditional teaching mode failing to attach enough importance to input of essence of language

In the majority of universities, the routine procedures include teaching the content of text, vocabulary and grammar, and analysis of sentence structure. Affected by the kind of teaching mode, teachers tend to favor the impartation of linguistic knowledge, which is too monotonous to inspire students to be interested in English culture, with students passively accepting teachers' impartation and viewing the language and its culture in isolation from each other and lacking enough thought and judgment in English learning. Such kind of teaching, the one making English ability prior to English culture achieves some fruits in the short term though, without students' having the awareness of cultural differences between the West and East, problems often arise in their cross-cultural communication. Due to the real-life limits, such as the duration of course, tasks and assignments, and students' English ability, teachers usually choose to merely make a casual visit to or just skip the part of comparing and contrasting the Chinese and Western cultures, although it is included in the textbooks.

2.2. Testing methods discouraging students from learning intercultural communication

English tests in universities, based upon the testing of vocabulary and grammar, examine students basic English abilities of reading, listening, writing and speaking more than their knowledge of the customs, traditions and values in English-speaking countries, including the midterm and final examinations, and national grade/band English

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tests, like College English Tests (CET). This testing method has to a large extent demoralized students from knowing the social backgrounds of those countries, viewing the linguistic knowledge as important rather than cross-cultural interaction. It is, therefore, difficult for students to actively think about and understand the close relationship between the language and culture, which detains them at the very level of learning the basics and expressional skills, largely depriving them of English thinking ability and cross-cultural communication ability.

2.3. Teaching environment hardly providing substantive opportunities for intercultural communication

With university campus remaining the main site for students to learn English, and teachers, textbooks, course wares or other materials serving as the main source for them to learn about intercultural communication, a lot of universities fail to provide students with such experiences and opportunities. It is hard for students, say, to be in a real business negotiation, which could have given them the chance to look in person into the reason that cultural shocks arise in business negotiations and the solutions. Even if teachers guide their students in simulated negotiations, the influences of mother tongue, especially of cultural awareness, can hardly be avoided on setting scenarios, issues and tactics of negotiation, which fails to reflect the process of intercultural communication. In such teaching conditions, the cognition students get is usually far from direct and comprehensive, and students may still use expressions improperly either on the basis of conditions or that of habits, which leads to barriers in communication.

3. Feasible Measures of Cultivating Intercultural Communication Ability in College English Teaching

3.1. Teachers enhancing their own awareness and ability of teaching intercultural communication

As the reform of education system is going all the way to the depth and educators are further exploring language teaching theories and practice, teachers gradually gain the knowledge that it neither does good to training students to properly apply their English ability to real-life communication, nor suits the current requirements of the development of our society by mechanical emphasis on the accumulation of vocabulary and grammar and the amount of practice rather than the teaching of cross-cultural interaction. However, a large number of college teachers are not fully aware of the importance of intercultural communication and have very limited access to the related knowledge, so it is hard for them to include cross-cultural elements in their daily teaching work.

As the propagator of English language and its culture, teachers can prepare themselves for the further study of relevant cross-cultural courses, such as Overview of English-speaking Countries, and Inside U.S. Culture and Life, to enrich their mastery of the cultures of mainstream English speaking countries, like history, geography, politics, economics, habits and values. By organizing research teams on intercultural communication, teachers can emphatically launch comparative researches on the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, like those between their daily life, work, customs and traditions, in order to extend students' horizons on both cultures and thus set the base for their improvement of intercultural communication ability. Also, universities can organize lectures on cross-cultural interaction for their teachers or provide them with the opportunity to study abroad, and extra relevant training so as to strengthen their awareness and ability of cross-cultural interaction teaching, breaking the stereotype by means of learning it at a close vantage. Besides, by reading Western classics and watching English documentaries, teachers and be involved in different aspects of cross-cultural interaction, extend their horizon while realizing the importance of cross-cultural English teaching.

3.2. Digging into content for teaching and reasonably introducing intercultural communication

English courses are mainly divided into two kinds, input (listening and reading) and output (writing and speaking), in the great majority of universities, making students' improvement of linguistic skills prior to the impartation of intercultural communication knowledge, while teachers are supposed to realize that culture is what language carries and what advances language internally, and they are complementary to each other. Hardly can students express what is in their mind and interact with others, unless they understand the underlying cultural essence of language. Therefore, language teaching within the cross-cultural communication requires teachers to introduce cultural elements reasonably.

During the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing, teachers can involve the knowledge of intercultural communication in the lesson content, for example, by choosing the materials dealing with British and American cultures to train students' oral and listening ability, bringing to students the knowledge of literature and culture related to the lesson text in the courses of reading and writing. Meanwhile teachers can introduce to them the cases of cultural shocked between and, based upon cultural background, put forward topics of enlightenment to discuss. When it comes to those involving Chinese and Western customs and traditions, like festivals, for example, students can be offered the chance to analyze the similarities and differences between the Hungry Ghost Festival (Zhongyuan Festival) and Halloween, with the help of teachers to elicit the reasons thereof, by which students are not only able to enhance their cognitive un-

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derstanding of the underlying culture of English language, picking up the habit of actively knowing different cultures, but also to gradually gain their motivation and ability of enquiry in language learning.

3.3. Employing multiple teaching measures combined with Internet

The fast development of modern informational technology has brought great convenience to fields including education. As class to which Internet is applied enriches teaching forms and materials, it becomes easier to take students to the scene of real English-speaking land to directly experience cultural differences through audio and video materials. It is also advisable for teachers to create intercultural environment by multimedia in class to guide students' response towards it in simulated conversations, in accordance with pragmatics and situations. For instance, to help students understand the customs of hospitality in English-speaking countries, teachers can dig into the details of videos presented, such as classic clips of American TV series involving treating guests, then organize students to demonstrate role-playing in the particular scene—one student plays the role of the American host and another two the guests—after the clip finishes. When simulating the conversation, students will be fully immersed in it using communicational expressions like invitation, reception, thanks and farewell, which helps them train their cultural way of thinking and expressing in close to real English-speaking environment.

Meanwhile, teachers are also advised to use diverse materials on the Internet, like mass media, various English websites and apps, to make students highly motivated in English learning, specifically, encouraging students to deeply understand British and American cultures from a large amount of current events and news, science, education and popular articles audios and videos to strengthen their sharpness towards cultural differences and the ability of self study and independent thinking as well.

3.4. Teachers and students working together to build the resource bank of intercultural communication

Since college English textbooks seldom deal with intercultural communication and there are few systematical and correct materials of intercultural communication on the Internet, they may not meet students' needs. Worse still, students may have no self-study resources to compare and contrast Chinese and Western cultures and carry out intercultural communication in double direction. To find more resources for students to learn intercultural communication, teachers can work with students to make the most of the advantages of portable terminals, which are not limited in time and area, combining the use of multimedia and texts, to discover more approaches of training students' ability of intercultural communication. For example, teachers can push knowledge of intercul-

tural communication, collected by students and selected by teachers, to students in the whole university through Wechat official accounts.

Another approach is that teachers and students cooperate with each other to form vlog teams to take vlogs about intercultural communication with regard to Chinese and Western cultural differences in the aspects of living habits, customs and traditions and values, and upload them to campus websites or other study platforms. The content of such kind of vlogs can be the extension and addition to textbooks. Also it can be an independent intercultural resource. For example, teachers can take a vlog of job interview to analyze the expressions inside, providing opportunities for students to practice in high real scenes so as to experience the differences in ways of communication as a result of different cultural backgrounds—in a job interview, Chinese tend to be modest and keep a low profile by avoiding boasting their abilities while Americans try their best to persuade the interviewer of their potential to suit the position.

Teachers and students' posting learning materials about intercultural communication through official accounts and organizing teams to take vlogs make a systematic contribution to the enrichment of their intercultural communication materials for self-study. By joining in such activities, students gain the ability to understand linguistic knowledge and corresponding culture more deeply, and deal with cultural shocks much more effectively.

4. Conclusion

The support of talents equipped with intercultural communication ability is of great urgency to the lasting and sound development of Belt and Road Initiative. As the cradle of international talents, universities need to meet the requirement of social development, targeting at cultivating and outputting intercultural communication talents. According to such direction of talent cultivation, college English teaching should cease to rely on the traditional teaching mode, but depend on the impartation of cultures to help students gain sharp insight toward the differences between cultures, guiding them to carry out correct intercultural communication in certain contexts, bringing out language's function of communication in the real sense. In this way, intercultural communication talents of high international vision of participating in international affairs and competitions can be produced.

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