

Teaching Methods and Countermeasures of Cross-Cultural Communication in College English

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Abstract: English, a universal language and the vital link of friendly exchanges and cooperation between countries and people, is gaining extensive attention from domestic government and society nowadays. However, at present teachers still adopt traditional teaching methods in the process of college English education, namely strengthening indoctrinating teaching of vocabulary and grammar, with little emphasis laying on the differences between Chinese and Western cultures and their ways of communication, causing serious risks for students' future occupation. In this case, the work, in combination with years of work experience, stressed a brief analysis of the ways to cultivate students' cross-cultural competence in college English teaching.

1 INTRODUCTION

As is known to all, China is a country formed by fifty-six nationalities, with different ethnic cultures preserved in each minority. Just as different regions share distinctive customs, there are huge cultural variations between countries as well. Under the circumstances of globalization, cultural diversity has given rise to an immense barrier for the national economic development and international academic exchange. Thereupon, English, serving as the bridge for communications among different countries, is of great significance to the cultivation of students' English cross-cultural competence. Nevertheless, the English teaching in the period of high school education is far from perfect, mainly available to the exam-oriented education while useless for the application in real life. Hence, the English teaching at the university level should no longer rest on the mode of exam-oriented education, but rather make study serve the practical purposes. Teachers and students are required to attach importance to the acknowledgment of western culture, communication customs and lifestyle, as well as highlight the education of grammar and context, which is often mentioned as the training of English cross-cultural competence.

2 DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS-CULTURAL TEACHING COMPETENCE IN COLLEGE ENGLISH

As Cross-cultural education is one of the most important aspects in college English, domestic government and education sectors have given much attention to it long before. Temporarily, the cross-cultural teaching competence has been underlined as the focus in the process of college English teaching at all colleges and universities, while cross-cultural teaching has just been regarded as an indispensable part of modern college English education. The cross-cultural communication, firstly put forward by an American educator in the 1950s, refers to a way of communication between people or groups with different cultural backgrounds. Until around 1980s when China took off its reform and opening up, the so-called communication competence and mode were gradually introduced in. Then owing to the past 30 years of development, studies on cross-cultural communication have achieved a certain accomplishments. On this basis, education sectors have paid enough attention to the role of cross-cultural communication in English education and teaching. It is clearly regulated in the newly issued College English Objectives that stress should be laid on the cultivation of cross-cultural communication competence among college students. Students are

expected to be guided to learn and apply knowledge under the background of foreign culture, instead of being taught on the surface of domestic culture. Through constant research, domestic educators make a division of English cross-cultural communication competence into three parts: basic communication skills, cross-cultural language use capability and social cultural ability. Thereinto, the basic communication skills consist of linguistic and non-verbal behavior skills, speech act competence and ability of communication; Cross-cultural language use capability can be distributed into three aspects, the abilities of using cross-cultural knowledge and communication strategy, and cross-cultural cognitive ability; Social cultural ability concludes the sensitivity of cultural knowledge and cultural literacy as well as that of cultural awareness and cultural differences. In spite of the adequate attention paid to the cross-cultural communication competence training in college English by education institutes, there is still a long way to go before fulfilling all the established expectations and goals.

3 TEACHING METHODS AND COUNTERMEASURES OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN COLLEGE ENGLISH

3.1 Cultivating in a Different Way from the Traditional Classroom Teaching

In the traditional classroom teaching, teachers are supposed to lecture on the podium while students are listening carefully on their seats—a typical mode of indoctrinating teaching, adverse to the application of language. If teaching in such a way, situations will always arise where students fail to understand the English background culture introduced by teachers or only be able to comprehend the superficial aspects. In order to conquer this problem, teachers can utilize an interactive teaching method, in other words, fostering good interaction between teachers and students. Once students have any doubts or misunderstandings about the cultural contents in class, it is allowable to raise hands and exchange ideas with the teacher at any time until the problem is settled. In the process of college English teaching, while teaching students the correct English grammar and cultural background, it is also necessary to make

comparisons about grammar, idiomatic expressions and cultural differences, through which students can truly understand the differences between China and the Western countries. For example, age is often discussed by Chinese people in daily life while seldom in the west, because for many western people, age is a personal privacy that is not suitable to be talked about as a topic.

In addition, in order to enhance the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communication competence, English teacher is able to demand students to collect materials about western culture after class based on the teaching progress and arrangements. Students are asked to exchange information and ideas collected with each other in English or Chinese, which depends on the English level of students. As for English majors, with better skills in English listening, speaking, reading and writing, it is suggested to use English for cultural communication. While for non-English majors, Chinese is also permitted. But students are required to translate all the contents into English after class. With this teaching method, students can gain more knowledge about western culture and their English abilities are effectively improved at the same time.

3.2 Cultivating by Means of New Science and Technology

With the rapid development of science and technology, our teaching environment is becoming more technical in recent years, with an increasing number of new technologies and inventions applied to the classroom teaching in college. Computers and network, absolutely the two most popular emerging technologies, are being extensively utilized in every respect of our life, work and study. At the moment, almost all the colleges and universities in China are equipped with multimedia instruction, which has already turned into a trend and orientation for modern education. Although really living in the western countries is the best and most effective way to understand their cultures, customs, idiomatic expressions and lifestyle, most students have no such an opportunity due to various reasons of family, economy, national policy, etc. However, multimedia teaching is conducive to solving this problem. By virtue of multimedia teaching and network, teachers can transmit the prepared materials, such as pictures and videos, to students in class, and set correct and good guidance. Thus, students are provided with a better environment to study and experience the foreign cultures and communication modes, so as to make comparisons about cultures in a more targeted

way, improve the English practical ability and lay a solid foundation for their future occupation.

3.3 Cultivating Students' Interest While Enhancing Teachers' Teaching Level

College English teaching in China mainly concentrates on the study of English grammar and vocabulary, with less focus on the cognition of cultural differences and communication modes. Gradually, this learning atmosphere can lead students to form an exam-oriented habit. In the process of routine study, without an awareness of cross-cultural communication cultivation, students merely listen to the teacher in class, but brush aside the cultural differences and communication modes that are not taught by teachers. Practice has proved that English reading is an efficient way to broaden students' outlook of western culture and enhance their abilities of cross-cultural communication. Therefore, teachers can recommend some foreign books, especially those about foreign cultures, for students according to personal reading experiences. Through extensive reading, students can acquire more recognition of western cultures, and indirectly improve their English cross-cultural communication skills. Teachers, occupying the absolute dominance in the classroom teaching, should make an example to students and take the lead to arouse awareness of cross-cultural communication. For instance, when doing introduction to a certain western culture, explanation and emphasis of that culture should be specifically stressed. The differences between Chinese and Western cultures can be highlighted through various comparisons about culture, communication modes and idiomatic expressions. In the mean time, teachers should also enhance their own teaching level and understandings of western culture by continuous studying. With an appropriate grasp of cultural and linguistic teaching as well as reasonable arrangement of time and quantity, teachers can do well in the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communication competence while ensuring the quality of language teaching.

3.4 Cultivating based on Classroom in College English Teaching

On the part of students learning in schools, the study of any subject is doomed to return to classroom, and college English teaching is no exception. Different from education overseas, the domestic educational method mainly concludes the classroom teaching,

where teachers are lecturing on the podium while students are listening on the seats. Besides, traditional English teaching method, emphasizing the teaching of grammar and accumulation of vocabulary, is widely adopted in the current college English education. Teachers teach students to speak English verbally, write words on the blackboard and even pronounce each sound of a word separately. Then, students only need to recite the contents taught by teachers as exams are always about some of the key points in class, with few testing points on cross-cultural communication. Consequently, teachers who write the text books are required to selectively add more knowledge of nature, society, humanity and science and technology to the text books in order to arouse students' learning interest and further enhance the efficiency of teaching in class and learning for students. In this way, teachers can make more effective efforts to develop students' keen interest of learning and raise their grades in college English course. Nonetheless, demonstrations about western culture are still scarcely seen in the text books temporarily, particularly the description of cultural differences.

Although grades of English course are improved effectively with such a traditional teaching method, serious risks will be left for the future profession of students, especially for those who are planning to engage in the English related jobs, because cultural differences may lead to severe inconvenience for English communication. For example, since different countries share diverse cultural backgrounds, reckless application of grammar is likely to bring about gross mistakes, or even make a joke embarrassingly. To solve this problem, teachers are encouraged to aggrandize more descriptions of different background cultures, customs and communication modes in the text books, as well as provide students with more opportunities to exercise their skills of cross-cultural communication through the learning of grammar, syntax and vocabulary. For instance, contents like introductions to western countries, such as Britain and America, about their policies, economy, culture and ways of communication should be exposed to students, teaching them that English education is not merely about language but more of a comprehension and master of the world culture. Expect for an acquisition of a language, English learning can help students widen the horizon and gain more knowledge about the world. Thus, students will develop greater interest in English learning, and the efficiency of classroom teaching will be enhanced simultaneously.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Exam-oriented education, a problem generally existing in the domestic education, has deeply rooted in the education system, including college English teaching. At present, various problems are occurring in the process of English teaching. Driven by the aim of enhancing students' grades, teachers only put a high value of grammar learning and vocabulary accumulation rather than the cultivation of students' practical utilization abilities, which causes a serious damage to students' future occupation. With more emphases laying on the cross-cultural communication training in college English teaching, it is of great help to improve English grades, and also conducive to arousing students' interest in English learning and enhancing their ability to utilize English in practice. Only in this way can students be able to adhere to the principle of making study serve the practical purposes.

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