The Cultivation of Quality Education in College English Teaching from the Perspective of Cultural Differences between China and Western Countries

Jing DAI
Chongqing College of International Business and Economics

Abstract: In recent years, with China’s unprecedented progress in economy, continuous improvement in science and technology and ascending international influence, the demand for outstanding talents has continued to increase. Therefore, improving students’ comprehensive quality and ability becomes the top priority. However, there exists a dilemma that the differences between Chinese and western culture pose certain influence on English study and different ways of thinking mode lead to communication barriers. Hence, the quality cultivation of college English should be integrated into Chinese and Western cultures. The cultivation of college English quality should be integrated into correct and objective understanding of Chinese and Western culture, which can continuously stimulate students’ interest in English learning and improve students’ English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Keywords: Chinese and Western culture; English teaching; Cultivation of quality education

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In English teaching, the main influence of college students’ learning barriers and failures does not lie in English teaching knowledge, but the cultural differences between China and the West. Every country has its own cultural origin, and cultural background drives the way in which social values and outlook on life are identified. Language and culture are the embodiment of a country’s cultural background. Misunderstanding of a country’s language and culture often stem from ignorance of the country’s cultural background.

Chinese culture and thoughts are mainly derived from Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius, which emphasize hierarchy and etiquette, selfless dedication, modesty and prudence, and the mean in doing things, unity and

About the author: Jing  DAI (1978-06), Female, Born in Nan’an District, Chongqing; Han Nationality ; Master Degree; Lecturer: research direction: English education
cooperation. On the contrary, Western culture advocates equality, individual freedom, self-centeredness and innovative spirit. In English learning, neglecting the background and culture of English learning is not conducive to students’ communication activities. Besides, superficial language learning without in-depth learning will cause obstacles to English study. Importantly, rich background knowledge of Western culture is of great help to students’ listening comprehension, reading comprehension and English writing. Meanwhile, it is of profound significance to understand Western culture to further improve students’ overall quality and enhance cultural heritage.

1. The Necessity of Chinese and Western Cultural Differences in Teaching

Language and culture are inseparable in English teaching. Language is a form of expression in human history and culture. It is a cultural carrier that can be fully reflected in the historical and cultural background. Culture cannot exist without language, and similarly, language cannot be separated from culture inheritance. Simple language teaching makes our English education not conducive to the smooth development communication activities. As a result, it is difficult to improve students’ comprehensive quality, which will directly affect students’ interest in learning English and their ability to take the initiative to acquire knowledge. To make things worse, English teaching will deviate from the original direction and affect students’ the future development.

(1) Individualism and collectivism

Misunderstandings caused by barriers between two cultures are very common in Chinese and Western cultural communication. Western culture inclines to individualism, which regards independence, autonomy, and equality as important ones, while individual is self-centered and has weak loyalty to the organization; whereas Chinese culture inclines to collectivism where the individual is a member of the group, and the individual behavior exert significant impact on the group. Chinese have a sense of collective honor and dedication, and are loyal and obedient to the group. For college English learners, lack of understanding of Western culture will create certain language barriers to learning. Traditional English learning is centered on teaching. Although students have mastered a large number of vocabulary in the classroom, they rely on the group, lack individual unique thinking and insights, lack the depth and breadth of expression content, and even have language problems in actual language skills training.

(2) Chinese culture and Western culture

Every nation has its own special culture, and the differences between Chinese and Western cultures also cause communication barriers and misunderstandings.
Views on matters vary a lot under different cultures. For example, in Chinese culture, the dragon is a sacred object with unlimited power, but it is regarded as a symbol of evil after the birth of Christianity. What’s more, influenced by traditional culture, Chinese people like to introduce our interests and hobbies at first meeting, which is generally considered normal. However, these aspects are all private in Western culture. Chinese do not mind talking about sensitive issues such as age and wages, but in Western culture, these are very taboo. All of these differences show that some unique cultural habits are also indispensable for us to learn English. In English teaching, attention should be paid to the awareness cultivation of cultural differences between China and the West so that English learning will not seem void. In addition, we should avoid only learning some superficial things without a deep understanding of western culture. We need to strengthen the English skill training, enhance cross-cultural awareness, understand Western culture in multiple levels, multiple dimensions and multiple forms, and increase the background knowledge of Western culture, thereby, effectively improving the learning effect. Students’ language communicative competence developed under different cultural backgrounds will change their way of thinking in language learning and better understand the customs and habits of second language countries. The improvement of students’ language communicative ability can enhance the thinking ability of Chinese and Western cultural differences, and effectively improve the communicative ability and understanding degree of communicative culture. If the understanding is not deep, it is easy to lead to violation of the rules, lack of courtesy and respect.

In addition, analyzing English words can better reflect the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. We should not only inform students of the meaning and usage of words, but also the cultural meaning behind the words. In this way, the word is a “living” word, not just a combination of letters. The attitude of foreigners towards dogs differs from that of Chinese. For example, the word “dog” in Chinese culture often means loyalty, docility, and friendliness, while it possesses a more profound meaning in English. “Every dog has its day” means “Every dog has its lucky day”. This is an idiom to comfort others when they are frustrated, which means that everyone has good luck at some time. “Dog-eat-dog” literally means that a dog eats a dog, the behavior of which appears cruel and ruthless. Consequently, it is used to describe cruel and ruthless and self-interested competition; “Work like a dog” literally means working like a dog, but the actual extended implication means working crazily.

(3) High uncertainty avoidance and low uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance affects an organization’s attitude towards risk. In society, people always feel threatened to uncertain and ambiguous situations. In order to prevent threats, many clauses, regulations and others will be stipulated.
Different organizations, societies and countries have different levels of preventing uncertainty. Countries with a high degree of uncertainty avoidance will try to avoid uncertain things. Under this circumstance, people have strong requirements for regulations and plans under great mental pressure, and they are aggressive towards study and work; while countries with low uncertainty avoidance are easy to accept uncertainty with less mental stress. They have more free time and relaxed attitude towards life.

In English teaching, due to the traditional Chinese educational concept, the common phenomenon is that teachers are always in the center of teaching. Teachers are the authority who have the main right to speak, but students are in the subordinate position of classroom teaching who seldom participate in the initiative of discussion and questions. Viewing from this situation, we should give full play to teachers’ dominance in organizing, coordinating and guiding students to study, and hand over the classroom to students, which is more conducive to broaden students’ horizon and their thinking, thus effectively helping students master the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, and improving students’ comprehensive quality and moral cultivation.

2. The Value Concept of the Difference between Chinese and Western Culture in Teaching

In today’s increasingly obvious globalization, cultural differences between China and the West are inevitable under different national values. Each society and group has its own unique values. It is under its guidance that Chinese and western countries have their own different ways of life and create different cultural characteristics. Affected by tradition, we value elders and children; while Western culture respects equality. They hold the opinion that father and son, elders, and juniors are all friends, so they call their names directly, and even the names of several generations may be the same. In China, these are considered disrespectful. In English teaching, we must know the collision of different value systems behind the culture, strengthen the cultivation of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, and grasp the connotation of their respective values, which can help students easily understand and adapt to the two cultural differences. According to the needs of social development, it is very necessary for teachers to gradually infiltrate these concepts in daily teaching.
3. Quality Cultivation Methods in the Differences between Chinese and Western Cultures

The quality education of college English in Chinese and western culture should pay attention to the teaching art, closely follow the textbook, properly supplement and give reasonable play to it. In English teaching, new ideas and passion are greatly needed. Quality education and cultural teaching should be closely combined together. Education and teaching functions should be given full play, which can improve students’ world outlook, outlook on life and values and lay a good foundation for their’ sustainable development.

(1) Transform English thinking

Chinese is a phonological language, and English is a phonetic language. The two different languages actually show different ways of thinking. Westerners tend to think in a direct mode, focusing on analytical thinking, reasoning and judgment; China has a long history that created curved thinking mode, focusing on dialectical thinking based on facts. English is an important language in international communication, and English grammar is completely different from Chinese grammar. In teaching process, we often neglect the cultivation of English thinking and often learn English with Chinese thinking. Thus, the problem of “Chinglish” arises, which leads to the failure to attain the ideal English learning efficiency.

In English teaching, integrating Chinese and Western cultural teaching activities enables students to improve English thinking ability, step out of traditional Chinese thinking mode, and upgrade the effectiveness of English teaching, which is beneficial to their overall quality.

(2) Create a learning atmosphere with Chinese and Western cultures

China, with a long cultural history of five thousand years, possesses deep national culture roots. In English teaching, we should not focus on our own national culture. On the contrary, we should treat Western culture in a correct and objective way and understand multiculturalism to promote the exchange, identification and mutual respect between different cultures. In our daily communication, teachers play a very important leading role who can create the most ideal English language learning atmosphere and integrate Chinese and Western cultures into teaching, which can stimulate students’ interest in English learning to a certain extent and effectively enhance students’ further knowledge about Western culture. In daily teaching, teachers should pay attention to guiding the standardization of Western culture and language so that students can better master Western culture knowledge, and skillfully use English to express ideas and communicate. In this way, teachers can also better guide and supervise students’ autonomous study. With the cognition of the national culture and the correct understanding of Western culture, a good
learning atmosphere can be produced, and then students’ comprehensive English ability and quality can be continuously improved.

(3) Improve students’ communicative skills

In recent years, with the continuous improvement of China’s economy, frequent trade exchanges, and continuous integration of cultural exchanges, more and more talents are in great need. Currently, educational information is constantly improving, under which situation students can have access to cultural information through multiple fields, and then combine with scientific teaching methods, textbook outlines as well as materials inside and outside the classroom. Teacher’s task is to create an environment where English is used for communication and to cultivate students’ ability to put English into practice. In teaching, teachers can organize students to carry out training activities and cultivate students’ listening and speaking skills in a lively and contextual form. First of all, in the classroom, teachers should pay attention to the accuracy of the English usage, making spoken English concise, clear and easy-to-understand. Hence, students’ oral narrative ability will be improved in a imperceptible way. Secondly, taking the classroom as a stage and attaching importance to role playing are conducive to the cultivation of students’ English thinking, through which ideal English teaching results can be naturally achieved. Furthermore, teachers can apply various information technology to provide students with rich resources such as video, audio, picture, enabling students to enjoy English learning contents with original flavor. Besides, teachers can also design diverse forms of speech contest, group discussions, situational performance and other activities to make students communicate with English and improve their overall quality and ability. From a cross-cultural perspective, it helps students understand Western culture and learn English correctly, providing a good way to improve their ability to use English.

(4) Provide learning and practice opportunities

English, as a language subject, can be learned better through practical participation. Classroom teaching depends on the teaching attitude of the teacher and the learning attitude of the students to a large extent. First of all, if permitted, teachers can conduct teaching of cultural works and cultural products display during the teaching period so as to stimulate and guide students’ interest in learning and provide them with time and space for thinking and imagination.

Secondly, activities and games can be introduced into the classroom so as to cultivate students’ imagination and awareness of participation in the competition, and then raise questions to encourage students to explore after class, which can further strengthen students’ independent learning ability. Besides, this kind of teaching mode can promote students’ cross-cultural communicative level when they obtain knowledge. What’s more, creative activities can be performed to provide a
sound atmosphere where students can exchange their ideas.

With the globalization of economy, English quality education and the cultivation of students’ cross-cultural awareness are of great significance. Language learning not only lies in the imparting of knowledge, but also the introduction of cultural deposits, through which students’ overall quality can be improved. The cultivation of students’ cultural adaptability and the understanding of cultural connotation are conducive to the development needs of society, nation and country. English teaching upgrades students’ language ability; cultural immersion broadens students’ horizons and improves language communicative skills as well as the effect of college English quality training, thus promoting Chinese culture to the world on the whole.

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