

A Study on the Integration of Chinese Culture in High School English Teaching

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Abstract: The inseparable relationship between language and culture indicates that culture teaching is indispensable in English teaching. The ultimate goal of culture teaching in English teaching is to cultivate learners' cross-cultural communication skills. Cross-cultural communication is a two-way process, which requires not only knowledge of English culture but also the use of English as a medium for disseminating Chinese culture to the outside world. However, in actual English teaching, the teaching of Chinese culture is a mere formality, and the teaching effect is not obvious. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a survey and research on Chinese culture teaching in high school English classrooms to understand its current situation, existing problems, and their causes, so as to provide suggestions for Chinese culture teaching in high school.

Keywords: Chinese culture; High school; English teaching; Integration

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1. Introduction

In order to teach a language well, it is necessary to not only focus on the teaching of individual words and grammatical structures but also emphasize cultural teaching, which is an important and indispensable part of foreign language teaching. Undoubtedly, the ultimate goal of integrating cultural teaching into language teaching is to help students use the language to communicate and realize the purpose of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication is a two-way process, requiring both absorption and dissemination. While exploring the culture embedded in the target language, it is also necessary to deepen the understanding of the culture of the mother tongue. Only through two-way cultural learning can we respect and understand each other's cultural differences, so as to solve problems and enhance learners' intercultural communication skills. Therefore, the English program in general high schools is not only responsible for language teaching, but also for disseminating Chinese culture, passing on the Chinese spirit, and enhancing mutual understanding and communication between China and other countries.

2. Problems in teaching Chinese culture in high school English classroom

2.1. Traditional teaching philosophy

Most teachers have a positive attitude toward the English expression of Chinese culture and support the integration of Chinese culture teaching in high school English teaching ^[1]. However, through classroom observation, it was found that most teachers only verbally supported the integration of Chinese culture in high school English classes but did not take action in actual teaching, and high school English classes were still dominated by routine teaching. This routineness is mainly reflected in the following two aspects: firstly, cultural teaching constitutes less class time compared with language teaching. The high school English classroom is still teacher-centered, with language knowledge as the focus of teaching, consciously ignoring content related to Chinese culture. Secondly, even if Chinese culture teaching is involved, due to the lack of teachers' ability, they treat Chinese culture no differently from other teaching contents and do not properly handle the objectives, contents, and methods of Chinese culture teaching according to the contents of Chinese culture.

2.2. Insufficient input from students in learning Chinese culture

In addition to learning English language knowledge, culture, and skills, learners in the high school English classroom also need to master cross-cultural communication skills, so as to promote the Chinese spirit and disseminate Chinese culture. This goal cannot be achieved without teachers' attention to the input of Chinese culture ^[2]. Only when teachers regard Chinese culture as the teaching goal of the English classroom and increase the effective integration of Chinese cultural content in all aspects of teaching, can students be guided to form an emotional belonging to Chinese culture. However, a large number of students think that teachers do not pay attention to the integration of Chinese culture in the English classroom, and that they seldom provide additional explanations of Chinese culture in the teaching materials and rarely carry out input activities of Chinese culture. Input is the most important aspect of language learning, which is the prerequisite material and foundation of language output; without input, output cannot be carried out ^[3]. Therefore, inadequate teaching of Chinese culture in high school English classrooms creates a dilemma of insufficient input for students in learning Chinese culture.

2.3. Lack of after-school activities involving Chinese culture

The New Curriculum states that cultural learning requires learners to have a deep understanding of its connotations, mastery of basic knowledge, and the ability to transfer that knowledge. The promotion of Chinese culture teaching in high school English classrooms is a process of internalization and externalization, and it is difficult to improve students' ability to express Chinese culture in English by classroom teaching alone. After class, cultural output channels are still needed to help students transform what they have learned into the ability to promote and disseminate Chinese culture ^[4]. However, through classroom observation, it was discovered that there is a lack of transition and continuity between classrooms in English language teaching, and it is difficult for students to apply what they have learned about Chinese culture to real-life situations and form a complete chain of Chinese culture learning.

3. Countermeasures to improve the teaching of Chinese culture in high school English classrooms

3.1. Updating teaching concepts and enhancing cultural confidence

As the main carrier of exporting local culture, English teachers' understanding of Chinese culture teaching in high school English classroom and their own Chinese culture accumulation directly affect students' degree of knowledge of Chinese culture and ability to express their Chinese culture in English. Therefore, teachers should

first play their role in promoting Chinese cultural learning to improve the teaching effect. The current English teaching still focuses on the explanation of language knowledge, favors Western culture, and overall neglects the integration of Chinese cultural content. However, with the rising demand for cross-cultural communication in society, English language teaching cannot focus solely on the task of language teaching but also the important task of cultural transmission. Teachers' views on Chinese culture affect their design and implementation of specific teaching ^[5]. Therefore, updating English teachers' cultural teaching concepts and enhancing their cross-cultural awareness have become the first step in teaching Chinese culture. First of all, teachers can study the New Curriculum to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements of basic English teaching on Chinese culture, so as to update their concepts of cultural teaching. The New Curriculum Standard clearly states that "on the basis of improving students' comprehensive language skills, English teaching should also help students learn, understand, and appreciate outstanding Chinese and foreign cultures, so as to strengthen their cultural self-confidence." Through the study of the New Curriculum, teachers can be aware of the changes in the definition of the concept of cultural awareness and the emphasis on the indispensable status of Chinese culture teaching in basic English teaching, so as to change the traditional English teaching concepts and ultimately form a correct understanding of the teaching of Chinese culture in the high school English classroom. Secondly, English teachers can consciously pay attention to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures in their daily life and teaching, and strengthen their cultural self-confidence through the comparison between Chinese and Western cultures. When teachers realize the appeal of Chinese culture from the depth of their content and take pride in it, they will be able to turn it into a working motivation in English teaching, infect and educate every student with their passion for Chinese culture, cultivate students' sense of national pride, and enable them to take up the important task of inheriting Chinese culture ^[6].

3.2. Enriching the methods of teaching Chinese culture and creating diversified learning conditions

English education aiming at cultural self-awareness is different from the previous teaching mode focusing on comprehensive language skills and Anglo-American culture. Since the textbooks contain many excellent Chinese cultures as well as comparisons between Chinese and Western cultures, teaching Chinese culture in the English classroom requires a variety of teaching methods. In addition to the direct lecture method, teachers can also make use of cultural discussion method, cultural practice method, cultural expansion method, cultural comparison method, and other diverse methods to teach Chinese culture in high school English classrooms. Cultural discussion is a method in which teachers use the Chinese and Western cultural contents in textbooks to put forward a point of view or an opinion in English teaching ^[7]. Cultural practice is a method of guiding students to think about a certain topic through student-student exchanges or teacher-student discussions. It can, to a certain extent, motivate learners' interest in learning Chinese culture and develop their critical thinking. For example, in the reading part of Unit 2 of Compulsory Study 2, when it comes to the protection of wild animals, asking the question "The writer says that we must change our way of life and learn to live in harmony with nature in order to save our planet. Do you agree? What do you think we should do or change?" guides students to deepen their understanding of the theme of the unit based on the reading text. Cultural expansion is a way for teachers to guide students to extend their practice or intercultural communication in the classroom or outside the classroom. Output-focused practice activities can maximize the development of students' English expression of Chinese culture. When the textbook presents the topic of contrasting Chinese and Western cultures, teachers should adopt the cultural comparison method in teaching to develop students' ability to compare and appreciate Chinese and English cultures ^[8].

3.3. Establishing multi-dimensional assessment to meet personalized learning needs

The New Curriculum proposes that “evaluation should focus on the formation of students’ core English competence, use a combination of formative and summative evaluation, and pay attention to the role of evaluation in promoting learning.” Multi-dimensional assessment and evaluation of students’ development require teachers not only to learn to use tests and assignments to achieve a positive refutation of students’ learning but also to utilize summative and formative assessments to evaluate students’ learning and to meet learners’ individual learning needs. For example, the English proficiency test and the assessment of Chinese cultural content in daily teaching sessions should be strengthened ^[9]. In order to fundamentally improve the phenomenon of the lack of Chinese culture in high school English classrooms, it is necessary to gradually promote the construction of various examination systems based on Chinese culture, and take the initiative to reflect Chinese cultural content in the form and content of the examination, as well as in the evaluation and results. Examinations are the baton for students’ learning and teachers’ teaching. When the reading comprehension and listening parts of English examination papers increase the assessment of general knowledge of Chinese culture, and when the written expression and oral test increase the evaluation of English expression of Chinese culture, students will understand what they are learning in the classroom, and the pressure of the examination will also motivate students to enhance their conscientiousness in learning Chinese culture. Secondly, it is suggested that teachers can also consciously incorporate Chinese culture into assignments and tests after the completion of each learning session. In particular, writing-related assignments and quizzes are not only easy to prepare, but also varied in form and theme, which are highly suitable for Chinese culture output practice. Through daily tests and homework practice, students can learn the knowledge and skills related to Chinese culture in English in a purposeful and targeted way, so as to gradually improve their English expression of Chinese culture. Additionally, summative and formative assessments are used to evaluate students’ learning of Chinese culture. Scientific and effective evaluation is conducive to the achievement of the goals of teaching Chinese culture in the high school English classroom. For teachers, it can help them get feedback information on their teaching, which can be an important basis for improving the teaching methods of Chinese culture and ensuring the effectiveness of teaching; for students, it is an effective means of adjusting their own learning strategies and improving their learning styles. In the daily learning process, teachers should not take students’ final grades as the only criterion for evaluating their learning performance; a certain dimension of evaluation cannot fairly and accurately reflect students’ progress in English learning. Therefore, formative and summative assessments should be used throughout the teaching of Chinese culture in order to comprehensively and clearly demonstrate the needs of different learners at different stages.

3.4. Enriching the learning path of Chinese culture through after-school activities

Chinese culture is significant and profound, and its connotation is not limited to literature, nor is its form limited to the classroom, but also includes extracurricular activities ^[10]. Therefore, although classroom teaching time is limited, teachers and schools can still make use of extracurricular time to extend Chinese culture into students’ extracurricular learning activities, creating extracurricular activities with rich connotations, thus helping students apply the cultural knowledge they receive into practice and facilitating the transformation of abstract concepts into cultural behaviors. Teachers should seize the time for extracurricular learning to enrich students’ ways of learning Chinese culture. For example, the task of the reading and writing part in Compulsory 1 Unit 2 is to write a travel plan, in addition to the regular classroom teaching content, teachers can also carry out certain expansions based on the theme of the situation. Teachers can let students use the time outside the classroom to make a brochure about a Chinese attraction of their choice. Students can access information, organize content, design and produce brochures in a lively and interesting learning context, which not only consolidates vocabulary and

develops creative thinking, but also deepens their understanding of Chinese culture, and ultimately cultivates a sense of achievement and spiritual strength. Teachers can also recommend various English films, books, and radio broadcasts related to Chinese culture to students. These are some easy ways for students to learn Chinese culture in English expressions, which can quickly stimulate students' interest in learning.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, the following problems still exist in the actual English teaching practice: traditional teaching concepts, insufficient students' input in learning Chinese culture, and lack of after-class activities involving the content of Chinese culture. Based on these issues, the following solution strategies are proposed: (1) updating teaching concepts and enhancing cultural confidence; (2) enriching the methods of teaching Chinese culture and creating diversified learning conditions; (3) establishing multi-dimensional evaluation to meet individualized learning needs; and (4) enriching the ways of learning Chinese culture by using after-school activities.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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