

Thinking on the Methods of Cultivating Intercultural Communication Ability in TCSL Class

-- Take Brandeis University Advanced Elective Culture Class as an Example

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Abstract

With the increasing of China's comprehensive strength, enhancing the understanding of Chinese culture becomes the main reason to study Chinese. Thus, cultivating students' intercultural communication competence and improving their intercultural communication ability should be the main task of TCSL. As a TCSL teacher in the Advanced Chinese Class of Brandeis University, the author takes its elective culture course as an example. According to the important factor during the class: "cultural discussion and thinking", this paper, starting from the view of the TCSL teacher, aims to search for a way to improve their intercultural communication ability so that they can learn Chinese culture more smoothly.

Keywords

TCSL teacher; intercultural communication ability; the Advanced Chinese Class of Brandeis University; elective culture course.

1. Introduction

With China's national comprehensive strength enhancing greatly and the opening-up policy accepted widely, more and more foreigners choose to come to China for study, in that TCSL is growing into a hot field gradually. Based on the long history of China, the need to study Chinese has become more generally. Chinese elements such as pronunciation, words, grammar, writing and so on are significant for studying a new language, but culture is also throughout learning. TCSL teachers and their students may meet many differences and difficulties belonging to the social background, customary practices and contraindications. The problem that how to decrease cultural conflicts and reduce "negative transfer" of mother tongue culture is meant to be thought-provoking.

2. The Status of Elective Cultural Teaching in TCSL and Its Present Situation in Brandeis University

As a TCSL teacher in the Advanced Chinese Class of Brandeis University, the author find that most of the students has already learned Chinese for more than five years, and even some of them are Asian Americans, so their level is above the average. Thus, it is more important and useful for them to understand Chinese traditional culture and apply them to daily life and communication. Uphold this principle, TCSL teaching should be practicable and compatible. What Shen Xiaolong said: The Chinese never regarded language as an objective, static, isolated and self-contained image, but a process that a person participates and express their feelings, mutually perceptive, dynamic and self-sufficient in content. Lack of the knowledge of the Chinese culture will often lead to cultural interference and cultural shock on the part of the

students. At the same time, TCSL teachers should involve cultural teaching in order to shorten the period of "cultural shock" for foreign students and make them better complete the teaching tasks.

Nowadays, the idea of integrating cultural teaching into TCSL has been accepted by most of the professional and put into practice. However, in the process of practice, there are still various problems. For example, cultural teaching should exist in which step of TCSL class can better cultivate intercultural communication ability; how to choose the form and the content; how to solve the "culture conflict" and how to indirectly understand the students' point of view and find a balance point, leading to the collision between Chinese and Western cultures. These has been issues that's cut both ways, promoting the exploration of cultural education.

3. Current Situation of Educating Intercultural Communication Ability in TCSL Teaching at Brandeis University

Intercultural communication ability refers to communication between people of the same race, but different ethnic backgrounds. The cultivation of intercultural communication ability can help students better understand the interpersonal meanings reflect social communication and social roles between participants in speech behind Chinese language rules in TCSL class. Although it is significant to cultivate intercultural communication ability, the author find it difficult to realize.

In order to reduce the negative transfer of mother tongue, Brandeis University uses its own textbooks. Some content will be written from a Western perspective, forming a set of "intermediary Chinese" that is gaped to the real life. In terms of the content and form of teaching, they ignored the cultivation of intercultural communication ability and the content sometimes lags performance to a certain extent, so that there is no specific content and method to enable students to acquire more cross-cultural knowledge. According to teacher-student interaction, the current situation of culture teaching and learning is discouraging; an ignorance of culture can lead to culture shocks or conflicts.

4. Suggestions for TCSL Teachers to Cultivate Foreign Students' Intercultural Communication Ability

4.1. Teaching Preparation

Teacher must have sufficient cultural knowledge. To improve their own intercultural communication ability, TCSL teachers are supposed to understand not only the traditional Chinese ideology and culture, but also the relevant western culture, make comparison between different cultures in an effective and proper way and seek common ground while reserving differences. Based on the teaching feedback from the author and other teachers, it is agreed that the students have acquired the ability to think about Chinese culture and domestic news at the advanced level. Therefore, before teaching culture content, it is necessary for teachers to grasp the accuracy of cultural content and adjust it in order to adapt to teaching.

Be moderate and gradual when preparing lessons. The ratio of language teaching and cultural teaching is 5:1 at the elementary stage, 4:1 at the intermediate stage and 3:1 at the advanced stage. It can be seen that with the continuous learning of Chinese knowledge, the proportion of cultural content has become heavier. During the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, it is necessary to master the quantity of each stage to ensure that students can fully accept it. The difficulty of teaching becomes more and more in-depth as students become more familiar with China and Chinese culture. In this way, students can make better use of the knowledge they have learned before and apply it to new knowledge in order to solve some new cross-cultural

problems arising from the new knowledge, so that their intercultural communication ability can be promoted.

4.2. Class Teaching

Simulate the cultural environment. The learning environment refers to the combination of learning resources and interpersonal relationships faced by students in the learning process. The learners discussed by the author learn Chinese in a non-target language environment, so the target language learning resources are not abundant. At the same time, compared with the natural language environment, the lecture hall language environment is confined to the formal learning in the lecture hall, and it is easy to only attach importance to the teaching of knowledge and ignore the communicative nature of language itself. Therefore, the author believes that in teaching, the classroom will visually stimulate the cultural background to form an immersive teaching atmosphere. It will be better if the content of cultural lectures are more practical and operable. Through practice, culture is integrated into the explanation of the four major elements, so that students can better apply them to their lives and cultivate their intercultural communication ability to solve problems.

Always run through both horizontal and vertical lines. Horizontally, teachers should pay attention to the homogeneity and disparities in Chinese and foreign cultures, while vertical is to understand the cultural background and history, explain reality with history, guide students to discover that each culture is formed through historical precipitation, that is to say different histories will inevitably give birth to different cultures, and then let them accept cultural differences in a better way.

Use personal experience. According to the acculturation theory, the familiar culture is used to reduce social distance, and the psychological distance is shortened by resonance, which means it can reduce the psychological burden and rejection of students. Therefore, teachers can use their own experience in teaching. After comparing, the author found that when teachers introduce their own experience or problems encountered when they studied abroad to support the point of view, the students will have a higher degree of understanding and resonance, they are more willing to put aside psychological precautions and improve their own intercultural communication ability.

4.3. Teacher-Student Interaction

Teacher-student interaction is communicative. In the link of teaching interaction, teachers should fully consider cultural differences and use the misunderstandings and conflicts brought about by these differences to let students learn how to solve communication problems. This is communicative and fundamentally different from linguistic learning. Use daily questions and answers and situations for cultural learning, rather than just learning professional cultural knowledge. If using the learned culture knowledge to solve the cross-cultural communication problems encountered in China is one of the key points of this lesson, and the teacher-student interaction is one of the important links in the classroom, you can use role-playing and other means to overcome this difficulty point in teaching.

Follow the principles of avoidance, coordination, and tolerance. Avoidance refers to avoiding discussions with students that involve political, military, confidential topics, or sensitive topics that are likely to cause controversy shortly. When students mention this type of topic for some special reason, the teacher must be able to recognize and change the topic cleverly to bring the classroom topic back to the right track, and not cause unnecessary conflicts and troubles. Coordination refers to taking an objective attitude when encountering a taboo problem, maintaining neutrality at all times, and avoiding any bias when a conflict has already occurred. Instead, it should be euphemistic or direct reminder based on the conflict situation, and emphasize related cultural taboos with students, remind students to seek common ground

while reserving differences, and be tolerant and open in intercultural communication. Knowing that the national cultural taboos are the bottom line that cannot be violated in intercultural communication, you must also learn to empathize, appreciate and learn the advantages of other national cultures, and adopt the attitude: not easy to evaluate or deny the cultures that you do not agree with. Tolerance means allowing misunderstandings or mistakes due to lack of experience so that teachers and students can complete the communication together.

5. Conclusion

According to the passes for education and the role of intercultural communication ability in TCSL today, TCSL teachers need to find the disadvantages and the shortage. This paper based on the own experience puts forward the thinking and enlightenment to teaching reform. Teaching is not only from the perspective of language, but also spare more affords on the cultivation of intercultural communication ability. Therefore, how to improve it in TCSL teaching is still a problem worth teachers pondering.

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