

A Study on the Strategies of Integrating Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture into English Teaching in Junior High School

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Abstract: English teaching should not only own an open and inclusive spirit, but also be rooted in the soil of Chinese excellent traditional culture, so as to gain a place in cross-cultural communication. Junior high school students are in the critical period of forming their outlook on life and values, so that it is more important to adopt the imperceptible cultural teaching method to help them become builders and successors of socialism in China. This article defines the concept of Chinese excellent traditional culture, introduces the significance of Chinese excellent traditional culture to English teaching in junior high school, expounds the difficulties in integrating Chinese excellent traditional culture into English teaching in junior high school and explores and proposes strategies for integrating Chinese excellent traditional culture into English teaching in junior high school to help teachers better carry out cultural teaching to improve students cultural awareness effectively.

Keywords: Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture; Junior High School; English Teaching; Strategies

1. DEFINITION OF CHINESE EXCELLENT TRADITIONAL CULTURE

“Culture” is a neutral word which can represent both advanced culture and backward culture. Zhao Zhuang (2021) points out that Chinese excellent traditional culture refers to the most essential part of Chinese traditional culture, including the sum of all the material, institutional and spiritual products that are beneficial to the development of the time, which are abstract or experiential created by the Chinese nation in continuous labor practice. Cui Suojiang (2014) also mentioned that Chinese excellent traditional culture is different from Chinese traditional culture. The former is the essence of the latter, which also contains the dregs represented by feudalism.

In the author’s opinion, Chinese excellent traditional culture refers to the sum of the excellent national quality, national spirit, national emotion and national etiquette of the Chinese nation, including the patriotic spirit of “everyone is responsible for the rise and fall of the world”; the people’s consciousness of “worrying about the world first and enjoying the happiness of the world after”; the spirit of “expend the respect of the aged in one’s family to that of other families; expend the love of the young ones in one’s family to that of other families”. These great traditional Chinese cultures have always been the spiritual pillar on which the Chinese people rely for survival and the inexhaustible driving force for the Chinese nation to forge ahead in the course of China’s development of more than 5,000 years.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINESE EXCELLENT TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The excellent traditional Chinese culture embodies the moral concepts, philosophy of life and life philosophy accumulated by the Chinese nation over thousands of years, and plays an important role in the growth of today’s young people and national construction. In the new era, it is an inevitable trend of the development to integrate the excellent traditional Chinese culture into English, which has certain significance.

2.1. Meeting the Requirements of Ideological and Political Construction of the Course

“Ideological and Political Education” is a new theory proposed by China to improve the quality of higher education in recent years. Different from “Ideological and Political Courses”, it is not a “course” in form, but an idea in essence (Cai Jigang, 2021). It means that making the party’s thoughts and ideas are infiltrated into the teaching process of professional courses in a relatively hidden form, so that students can be imperceptibly influenced by mainstream values. This theory also applies to basic education. The period of middle school is an important period for young people to form their outlook on life, world outlook and moral outlook. Due to their strong ability to accept new things and lack of necessary discrimination, middle school students are especially susceptible to the influence of external environment. Therefore, in the process of learning English, students receive a large amount of British and American culture, and are impacted by different values and world views. Their thoughts may be “westernized” in a subtle way. Therefore, it is necessary to guide students to correctly view British and American cultures, deal with the differences between Chinese and western cultures, and make students firm in their political stance, so as to always safeguard the interests of the country, nation and people. This is not only the purpose of ideological and political construction of efficient English courses (Sun Zhubin, 2022), but also the highest goal of English education. The Chinese excellent traditional culture, as the essence of the five thousand years of Chinese history, undoubtedly provides material support for Chinese students to compare Chinese and foreign cultures. Therefore, the exploration and application of Excellent Chinese traditional culture is undoubtedly a very effective and intuitive way to carry out curriculum ideological and political thinking.

2.2. Improving Students’ Intercultural Communication Ability

Chinese excellent traditional culture is the premise of Chinese cultural exchanges with other countries. Only when China has its own traditional culture can it be qualified for necessary cultural exchanges. Only when students are proud and confident of Chinese excellent traditional culture can they be on an equal footing in communication. Cultural exchange is not only the mutual understanding of communication objects, but also the cultural collision and cultural influence on the basis of re-communication. In the process of communication, blindly respecting and accommodating each other cannot achieve the goal of equal communication. On the contrary, appropriately maintaining oneself can win respect from each other (Wang Yan, 2015). In addition, the integration of Chinese excellent traditional culture into junior high school English teaching can make a comparison between Chinese and foreign cultures in English teaching, so that learners can understand the conflicts, contradictions and similarities and differences between cultures. On the basis of compatibility, learners can correctly make a judgment of two different cultures, consciously switch cultural communication scenes. They can consciously examine their own values from the perspective of western culture, think about their own behavior, produce a certain cultural acceptance and critical consciousness, reduce the error of cultural understanding and reduce the ambiguity of expression. Therefore, in the context of globalization, the Chinese excellent traditional culture not only needs to be inherited and promoted in China, but also needs to be publicized globally to expand the influence of Chinese culture in the world. The practice of integrating excellent traditional culture into English teaching in junior high school will enable those students to have the ability to introduce Chinese excellent traditional culture in English, shape more independent cultural personality and have a real international cultural vision and local cultural feelings on the basis of cultivating students’ awareness and ability of cross-cultural communication.

2.3. Cultivating Students’ Core Competences of English

The English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as “the New Curriculum Standard”) clearly points out that the English curriculum for compulsory education in China in the new era is a basic cultural curriculum that implements the fundamental task of fostering virtue. It aims to develop students’ core competences in English, and should initially highlight the integration and unity of instrumental and humanistic characteristics, with basic, practical and comprehensive characteristics. The core competences of English subject determined by the new curriculum standard includes four elements, namely, linguistic ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. The education of Chinese excellent traditional culture belongs to the category of developing students’ cultural awareness. Junior high school English teachers should also

shoulder the sacred mission of “influence people with culture, educating people with culture and constructing foundation with culture”. In addition, the four elements of the core competences of English discipline essentially maintain the relationship of “four in one”. While cultivating cultural awareness, they will promote students’ language ability, thinking quality and learning ability to varying degrees, which will also improve the quality of English teaching to a certain extent.

3. PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATING CHINESE EXCELLENT TRADITIONAL CULTURE INTO ENGLISH TEACHING IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

In view of the current situation of English teaching in middle schools, schools and teachers have not really realized the important value of Chinese excellent traditional culture for English education, so that the cohesion and integration of the two in education and teaching is insufficient, and the teachers’ cultural literacy level is not consistent, which greatly weakens the practical effect of the educated people.

3.1. The Simple Teaching Method

Good education must be the result of bilateral interaction between teachers and students, especially in English, which focuses on communication and communication skills. However, in the actual daily teaching, most teachers unilaterally emphasize the teaching of language knowledge in order to train students’ test-taking ability, and ignore the introduction of cultural background and cultural values so that there are several problems when they explaining Chinese excellent traditional culture. On the one hand, students’ understanding of culture is superficial, and the phenomenon of “two skin” between cultural teaching and language teaching is serious, which is not conducive to the improvement of students’ cultural awareness and the cultivation of core competences of English subject. On the other hand, the one-way transmission of traditional cultural knowledge leads to insufficient interaction between teachers and students. The main reason is that some of English teachers in junior high school do not set up modern education concept. They ignore students’ learning participation and classroom subjectivity and still treat teachers as the leaders of the classroom which leads to the traditional culture education is too theoretical and abstract to mobilize the students interest in learning and weaken the effect of culture teaching.

3.2. The Lack of Infiltration of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture in Textbooks

Textbooks are the basic elements of English teaching, the auxiliary tool for students to learn English and the important cultural carrier. Therefore, it is of great significance to infiltrate Chinese excellent traditional culture into textbooks. However, there are still some deficiencies in permeating Chinese excellent traditional culture in the current textbooks of our country. Taking the junior high school English textbook of PEP(Go for it!) as an example, the shortcomings mainly focus on the following two aspects. On the one hand, the depth of cultural knowledge in the textbooks is not enough. In this edition of the textbook, although plenty of Chinese excellent traditional culture are mentioned, most of them are simple words, phrases, short sentences or pictures, which are not introduced in detail. The idiomatic English expressions about Chinese culture that students can learn from them are also limited. On the other hand, the scope of cultural knowledge permeated in the textbooks is not wide. There are also the great achievements of our predecessors in politics, economy, astronomy, geography, medicine and so on, but these splendid cultural heritages are rarely mentioned in it. Based on the above two points, it can be found that the cultural knowledge permeated in English textbooks is not systematic so that students can only accept relatively scattered knowledge points, which is not conducive to students’ understanding of complex Chinese cultural content.

3.3. The Low Cultural Awareness of Teachers

As the disseminators of cultural knowledge, English teachers’ own teaching philosophy directly affects students’ learning attitudes and results. Teachers should not only make full use of bearing in the teaching materials and teaching contents of Chinese excellent traditional culture, should also be according to the needs in teaching moderate extension and expansion of culture to help students use English to introduce the excellent culture of the Chinese nation to foreigners on the basis of understanding Chinese excellent traditional culture properly and correctly. Besides paying attention to the teaching of Chinese culture in English class, English teachers should also have strong cultural awareness, attach importance to their own learning of Chinese culture knowledge, and improve their ability to express Chinese culture and make rational thinking about foreign cultures.

4. STRATEGIES OF INTEGRATING CHINESE EXCELLENT TRADITIONAL CULTURE INTO ENGLISH TEACHING IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

As there are some problems make it is difficult in integrating Chinese excellent culture into the English teaching in the junior high school, here are some strategies to help teachers better carry forward and develop Chinese excellent traditional culture in teaching.

4.1. Establishing a Correct Cultural Viewpoint

The New Curriculum Standard clearly points out that cultivating students' cultural consciousness is to cultivate students' understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and identification with excellent cultures, so as to enable students to have a certain ability of cross-cultural communication and dissemination of Chinese culture. The first step to cultivate students' cultural consciousness is to let them establish a correct cultural outlook -- "Chinese learning for the noumenon, Western learning for the use". Students are supposed to realize that the Chinese excellent traditional culture is the foundation of Chinese culture and Chinese people, and we take root here to absorb the advanced content of other cultures, so as to continuously enrich the connotation of Chinese culture for our own use.

Therefore, in English teaching, junior high school teachers should adhere to the principle of "Chinese learning for the noumenon, Western learning for the use" so that students can learn English language knowledge and think consciously about the differences between Chinese and Western cultures which makes students can feel the charm of traditional culture in the contrast thinking and realize the promotion of excellent traditional culture and spirit. In addition, teachers can dig in the excellent traditional culture about the Confucianism and Taoism to guide students to set up the correct view on language learning and let the students in the effective English language contrast and comparison of the Chinese language comprehension in the value of excellent traditional culture, so that students can understand its connotation which makes them will not blindly advocate western culture, not blindly abandon the traditional culture, set up the correct values and constantly improve humanistic literacy and strengthen knowledge accumulation. At the same time, students can not forget their "roots" in language learning. They are supposed to apply what kind of English skills they have learned to speak Chinese story well, inherit Chinese culture and be a cross-cultural exchange ambassador with a sense of responsibility and mission so that realizing the organic integration between the Chinese and western cultures and avoiding cultural hegemonism.

4.2. Constructing Cultural Curriculum System

Guide of the Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture Integrating into the Primary and Middle School Curriculum clearly points out that Chinese excellent traditional culture education discipline arrangement mode of "3 + 2 + N" which means Chinese, History and Politics are to carry out the education of Chinese excellent traditional culture core curriculum. The Arts and PE are two important courses of implements of Chinese excellent traditional culture education while other subjects are the carriers of Chinese excellent traditional culture education which should be selected and guided according to the characteristics of subjects. Although English is not designated as the core course of cultural education, it is positioned as an important carrier of cultural education. This means that English also shoulders the burden of cultural education, and can be combined with other disciplines to jointly cultivate students' cultural awareness.

Therefore, to integrate Chinese excellent traditional culture into English teaching in junior high school, the curriculum system should be reformed and curriculum resources should be enriched. Based on the actual development of regional culture, localization curriculum resource teaching system can be actively constructed (e.g. Zigong salt culture, Zigong dinosaur culture, etc.), so that students can understand the cultural connotation of excellent traditional culture in various aspects based on regional reality and their own experience, so as to realize the construction of a good English learning context. Students can consciously seek the fusion point between Chinese culture and Western culture in the English cultural background. In the process of constructing localized curriculum resources and teaching system, it is required to proceed from students' reality and enhance students familiarity with learning excellent traditional cultural knowledge which can imperceptibly affect students and their thinking logic and values so that teachers can prevent students from westernizing their thoughts and

culture in the process of learning western culture and make students consciously resist bad ideological and cultural trends to improve the effectiveness of English teaching and ideological and political education. To be specific, English teachers can organize a “Cultural Teaching Community” with some teachers from other disciplines to design core courses with different types of excellent traditional culture as the core, so as to realize interdisciplinary cultural education and ensure the quality of cultural teaching.

4.3. Organizing Colorful Cultural Activities

It is obviously insufficient to integrate excellent traditional culture into English teaching in junior high school by relying solely on the classroom explanation. So, teachers have to integrate theory with practice which means English teachers should carry out rich and colorful English teaching activities with cultural themes and let students consciously construct the relationship between excellent traditional culture learning and English learning in the participation of activities to greatly enhance the interest of English teaching.

During the teaching progress, English teachers would better to carry out knowledge competitions, literature recitation and art salons with the important or interesting contents of Chinese excellent traditional culture, so that students can enhance their sense of identity with excellent traditional culture in interesting activities and have a conscious awareness of comparative learning between Chinese and Western cultures. At the same time, some schools can also carry out cultural studies school activities and give students more senses and comprehensive cultural perception based on the Multimodality and Experience Learning Circle which makes the students consciously internalize cultural knowledge during the practice, obtain a series of direct experience, and form their own knowledge system. These are the teaching effects that can not be achieved on campus or in class. However, due to the limited learning ability of junior high school students, both classroom activities and research activities are supposed to be completed by the guidance of teachers which means that teachers have to summarize and review cultural themes and help students form a systematic knowledge system.

4.4. Strengthening the Connection between Classroom Teaching and Homework

Most teachers hardly ever integrate relevant contents of Chinese excellent traditional culture into their homework after explaining cultural knowledge in class. Some teachers pay little attention to culture when designing their homework, either based on the guidance book designated by the school or centered on the knowledge points of the examination, which also leads to the failure of students to get timely cultural output after certain cultural input in the classroom so that students are in the low efficiency of cultural learning.

Therefore, English teachers should take cultural content into account in the design of homework after class, and design the connection with the traditional Chinese culture taught in class. Take a reading class in unit 8, Volume II, Grade 8 of PEP(Go for it!) as an example. The content of this lesson is about American Thanksgiving Day. When teachers assign homework after class, they can transfer American Thanksgiving to some Chinese traditional festivals, such as the Spring Festival and the Dragon Boat Festival, so that students can introduce these meaningful festivals by using the knowledge they have learned in class and searching for information online. In addition, it is meaningful for teachers to encourage students to make Festival related handwritten newspapers, representative foods, etc. in their leisure time, so as to cultivate students’ practical ability and promote their all-round development.

5. SUMMARY

In summary, Chinese excellent traditional culture is the soul of the Chinese nation which plays an important role in promoting both individuals and the whole Chinese nation and is the inexhaustible driving force and spiritual pillar for the development of the people and the rejuvenation of the nation. As a basic course of fostering virtue, junior high school English curriculum is supposed to further promote the development of English subject core literacy to cultivate feelings with Chinese, international vision and cross-cultural communication ability of socialist builders and successors on the base of primary education so that the junior high school English education must pay close

attention to Chinese excellent traditional culture and integrate it into English teaching of junior high school. English teachers are supposed to cultivate students' cultural confidence through the inheritance and promotion of excellent traditional culture to make students can consciously choose and judge when facing western culture and enable students to improve their humanistic quality on the basis of understanding the cultural spirit so as to better carry out cross-cultural communication and show the elegant demeanor of China's great power.

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