

In stilling Cultural Know ledge Into Student 's M ind in O ral English Class

W E I Y u

(Xi 'an Sci-Tech U niversity, Xi 'an, Shaanxi 710054, China)

Abstract: College English Syllabus definitely points out that college English teaching aims at training students to acquire a certain ability to read, listen, speak, write and translate, thus enables them to communicate in English. When communication happens between people with different cultural backgrounds, their own special cultural backgrounds are inevitably reflected in the connotation and denotation of language. It's really essential to introduce cultural know ledge in oral English teaching. The introduction supplements and enriches oral English teaching, and helps students develop communicative competence so as to realize proper and accurate communication.

Key words: cultural know ledge; communication; oral English teaching

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Culture refers to life style of people including what they think, what they do and what they produce. Language and culture are interdependent and integrated. Language is the basis of culture and one of cultural carriers and expressions. In contrast, culture is the content of language and determines language. And language is rooted in specific cultural backgrounds. To a certain degree, linguistic structures and the use of language are determined by culture. For instance, vocabulary, grammar and rhetorical devices in Chinese are closely related to Chinese culture. It's true of English. Cultural evidence may also be found in English.

Each nation has its own distinctive culture which is formed from the differences in history, nature, politics, economy, religion, geological circumstance and so on. Cultural differences determine linguistic differences such as in syntax, morphology, context and semantics. When communication happens between

people with different cultural backgrounds, their own special cultural backgrounds are inevitably reflected in the connotation and denotation of language.

一、Cultural Differences are Reflected in Language

With regard to vocabulary, there are a great number of words whose rich cultural connotations are quite difficult for foreign language learners to understand, let alone their denotations. For example, the word "milk" refers to hot milk in Chinese because Chinese are used to drinking hot milk, but it means cold milk in English. The word "kitchen" reminds Chinese people of a small room in which cooking is done whereas in America it suggests a picture of a place in which families chat, do cooking or have meals.

This linguistic phenomenon is also reflected in

the words expressive of color, animal and plant. These words have different symbolic meanings in different social cultures. "Black" symbolizes evil, sham and error in Chinese, whereas it also symbolizes wisdom, thrifty and loyalty in English. "Red" is the symbol of good fortune in Chinese, and "blue" has the same meaning in English. "Magpie" signifies a forthcoming happy event in Chinese while it refers to a type of noisy bird with black and white feathers and suggests a person who talks a lot in English. "Dragon" is the emblem of emperor and holiness in Chinese, but evil in English. The "old dragon" becomes the symbol of devil.

二、Cultural Differences Have an Important Influence on the Communicative Mode of Language

Americans and Englishmen greet each other by talking about weather. But Chinese prefer such greetings as "Where are you going?" and "Have you eaten your meal?"

Americans, like Chinese, ask about where you work, how many children you have, and how large your house is. But there are some subjects that are avoided unless you have a very close relationship with the other person. They are considered too personal and therefore too impolite to ask. These subjects include the person's age, and almost anything that concerns the question of money. It seems very rude to an American to be asked how much he earns at work, and even parents often do not know how much money their children have.

Different attitudes towards age in Chinese and English give rise to different polite greetings. Old men are respected in China, so it's polite to say "Give up your seat to the old man." But it's impolite to say so in English-speaking countries, because the word "old" usually means no use and lagging behind the development of society.

In oral English, commendation performs interpersonal function, which is in such a frequent and wide use that it has become one of polite greet-

ings. People in English-speaking countries, especially Americans, usually accept commendation with pleasure, and respond by saying "Thank you." But Chinese are used to saying "No.", "It's nothing. It's bad", which is considered by Americans as impolite. Being too modest can certainly cause misunderstanding and unhappiness between speakers. Therefore, the absence of cultural background knowledge is bound to hinder communication.

三、Importance of Cultural Factors in English Teaching

Over the past 500 years, English teaching methods have mainly undergone six developing stages: translation method, direct method, audio-lingual method, contextual method, cognitive method and functional-notional approach. Each teaching method is the product of specific historic background and linguistic theory. The birth of each method makes English teaching methodology further improved. They are specifically representative of the continuous progress and civilization of human society.

The first method mainly adopts deduction to impart grammatical rules to students and then applies them to practical translation. The second is also called reduction, by which a foreign language is directly instructed and practiced without translation and grammatical analysis. The third was produced with the development of American structural linguistics and behaviorism psychology. Bloomfield, a representative of American structural linguistics, introduced the theory of stimulation and response, which has a great influence on the birth of the method. The method takes pattern drill as a process in which a series of stimulation and response thus happen. It emphasizes language forms with ignorance of actual meaning. The fourth was deeply affected by Firth, a representative of London School. Firth studied language development in terms of anthropology and sociology, who thought language and context were related. In this stage, a

brief dialogue is made in a specific context of situation. The fifth tries to train the intelligent ability of students. The representatives advanced three stages: cognition, practice and application, who thought practice and application must be performed on the basis of cognition. The sixth sprang up in the 1970s or the 1980s, which had absorbed the advantages of semantics, speech-act theory, sociology, anthropology and psychological linguistics for the purpose of developing and enhancing students' communicative competence. It lays an emphasis on language forms and functions, fluency and accuracy of language expression, authority of textbook, communication of teaching and learning, and requirements of students.

From above it can be seen that the cultural factors have been gradually valued since the adoption of the contextual method and become more and more important in FL T.

It's really essential to introduce cultural knowledge in oral English teaching. The introduction supplements and enriches oral English teaching, and helps students develop communicative competence so as to realize proper and accurate communication.

Cultural knowledge is rich as well as complex. Now the problem arises how cultural knowledge is introduced in oral English teaching. I think that the teacher plays a leading role, and he should guide the students to understand cultural differences between the eastern and the western and grasp some essential communicative codes.

(1) An outline introduction to Britain and America

I recommended students some books about western culture, which helped them have a systematic knowledge of and a panoramic impression on western culture. Some lectures were also delivered to students in order to deepen their understanding of western culture.

(2) Comparative analysis

Comparison makes analysis perfect. A comparison of the American and British culture with the Chinese culture makes the differences lucid to

students. It helps students gradually develop the sensibility of culture in the cross-cultural communication. The eastern and the western have different value systems for their own culture. The Chinese are famous for their modesty and comity, which are traditionally used to evaluate a person's moral character and outlook on life and the world. Young men grow up under the influence of the traditional value system. In contrast, the westerners praise individualism highly and take individual success as a criterion for evaluating the value of life. If they are unaware of cultural differences, there'll be probably conflicts in the mutual-communication between the eastern and the western people. Therefore, it's very important to know cultural differences. Since I found that a general comparison could not impress them deeply, I accepted some teachers' suggestion that comparison should be integrated with exercises such as role play and situational dialogues- students greeted each other, made commendation or expressed acknowledgement according to English customs and then performed it again in terms of the Chinese customs. Then I made a summary and pointed out the cultural differences so that students could have a deep impression on the differences and grasp communicative codes more and more accurately.

(3) Story telling

I encouraged students to collect some materials about misunderstanding or embarrassment caused by cultural differences and retell them in class, which not only made students know some cultural differences but also stimulated students' interest in study and gave them a chance to practice their oral English.

(4) Giving full play to foreign teachers' role

An evening party was arranged on the eve of Christmas last year. When students were singing and dancing, a Santa Claus suddenly appeared, with gifts on his back. He attracted students' attention at once. Then Santa Claus played by a foreign teacher began an introduction to Christmas. Students learned the origin of Christmas and how the western people celebrated it in a relaxing and happy atmosphere.

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英语口语教学中文化背景知识的引入

魏 羽

(西安科技学院 外语系, 陕西 西安 710054)

摘 要:《大学英语教学大纲》明确指出: 大学英语教学的目的是培养学生具有较强的阅读能力和一定的听、说、读、写、译能力, 使他们能用英语交流信息。当不同文化背景的人们在进行交流时, 他们各自特殊的文化背景势必反映在语言的内涵和外延上。因此, 在大学英语口语教学中向学生介绍背景知识是十分必要的。这种介绍是对口语教学的补充, 并能帮助学生发展口头交际能力, 为将来恰当、准确地用英语交流打下基础。

关键词: 文化背景知识; 交际; 英语口语教学

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· 简讯 ·

2001 '中国农业期刊年会暨中国期刊协会农业期刊分会 第一次代表大会在桂林召开

本刊常务副主编王倩当选为中国期刊协会农业期刊分会常务理事

由中国农学会、中国期刊协会联合召开的 2001 '中国农业期刊年会暨中国期刊协会农业期刊分会第一次代表大会于 2001 年 11 月 28 日至 12 月 1 日在桂林隆重召开, 来自中央 8 个部、委、局和 28 个省、市、区的 150 多个会员期刊社、编辑部的近 200 多名代表参加了本次会议。会议由中国农科院党组书记王红谊同志主持, 农业部原副部长相重扬同志出席了开幕式并作了重要讲话; 中国期刊协会联络部主任翟汝康同志作了题为“期刊发展趋势”的学术报告。

大会讨论、修改并通过了中国期刊协会农业期刊分会的筹备工作报告、工作条例及会费交纳办法。同时按照法定程序, 投票选举产生了由 111 人组成的第一届理事会和由 59 人组成的第一届常务理事会。常务理事会聘请农业部副部长张宝文同志为顾问, 农业部原副部长相重扬为名誉会长, 选举产生了以王红谊为会长, 李可心(中国农学会副秘书长)为常务副会长, 边全乐(中国农学会编辑出版部主任)为秘书长的 12 人领导机构。本刊常务副主编王倩同志当选为常务理事。

会上, 新当选的中国期刊协会农业期刊分会会长王红谊同志代表新一届理事会作了题为“抓住机遇, 锐意改革, 开创新世纪农业期刊新局面”的讲话。21 家期刊社(编辑部)的负责人作了大会发言。本次会议大家就共同关心的问题进行了广泛深入的研讨与交流。

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