




Integrating Chinese Culture into Middle School English Teaching by Telling China's Stories Well in English

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ABSTRACT

With continuous globalization, the relationship between language and culture has undergone new changes. English has become an international lingua franca and a means for communicators to express local culture in cross-cultural communication. Today, as different cultures are increasingly intertwined, China now needs to present itself and tell its story to the world, which is the call of The Times for mutual learning and common development among civilizations around the world. It is also a realistic call for building confidence in Chinese culture and educating people through political and moral education under the great changes that have never been seen in a century. Facing the new requirements of educational development in this era, English teaching in middle schools must undertake the mission of cultivating socialist successors who have an international vision and a sense of community of human destiny.

Keywords: Cultural Confidence; China's Stories; Middle School English Teaching

Introduction

English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education 2022 emphasizes that middle school English teaching should aim at cultivating students' core literacy in English subject from four aspects: language knowledge, thinking quality, cultural awareness and learning ability. Therefore, it has become an important teaching task to combine Chinese culture with English learning in middle school English classes and enhance students' ability to understand and express China's stories. From the national character of "striving to advance", to the national sentiment of "sacrificing oneself for the country", the traditional essence highlights the vitality of Chinese culture all the time. English can also be an important carrier and tool to spread Chinese culture. Nevertheless, English teaching is now mainly based on the imparting teaching mode. Although the new curriculum standard and the double-reduction policy were introduced, the situation of attaching importance to its instrumental trait while ignoring its humanistic trait in actual teaching has not been fundamentally changed. In order to maximize the integration of Chinese culture into English classes thus cultivating students' cultural awareness and enhancing their cultural confidence, this paper will elaborate on the current problems of "telling Chinese stories" in English classes and put forward specific solutions from the perspectives of teachers, schools and students.

Problems Presented by Integrating Chinese Culture with English Teaching

Teaching focuses on exam-oriented education

In our country, English teaching is influenced by test-oriented education thought. Teaching is often mainly based on mastering vocabulary and grammar, which is also the key to the teacher's guidance and examination. Although the promotion of the new curriculum reform has brought about changes in teaching concepts, making teachers pay more and more attention to students' understanding of the application of oral English, they still pay less attention to cultural interpretation. In English teaching, they are often satisfied with the interpretation of the content of the textbook itself, without considering its deep cultural connotation. Schools can carry out Chinese cultural publicity activities in diverse forms, so as to cultivate cultural confidence.

Students' limited understanding of Chinese culture

When it comes to Chinese traditional culture, students can only remind of some relatively superficial

content, and feel it is difficult to analyze and explain from the perspective of cultural ideology and cultural connotation. In the process of communicating with foreigners, when we need to introduce our traditional culture to the outside world, it is difficult for us to explain the deep cultural connotation due to the lack of relevant vocabulary or shallow knowledge. As a result, what people see and hear only remains on the surface, instead of understanding the meaning or spirit, which cannot show the profound cultural accomplishment that a country should have, and this seriously affects cross-cultural communication and the external communication of traditional Chinese culture. Some schools or teachers constantly emphasize the importance of English for the sake of enrollment rate, but ignore its essence. Consequently, students only learn the grammar and the meaning of words and do not understand the essence of the stories of China.

Teachers' literacy of traditional culture needs to be improved

We realize that the teaching level of English teachers is uneven, and the interpretation of English words is disparate in different contexts. If teachers have the wrong point of view, it will affect the further development of students, and even affect their cultural confidence. Teachers should not blindly worship the West and they are supposed to regard countries fairly when teaching relevant courses. Teachers should make full use of English textbooks and infiltrate patriotism into teaching activities. Besides, some elements related to Chinese culture, including Chinese philosophy, customs, values, and policies are also of great importance in telling Chinese stories. The book "China's Story Goes Global" provides some solutions to the problems arising in international communication, which can be used as a reference for teachers.

Solutions to the Current Problems of Integrating the "Chinese Stories" into English Teaching

(1) Teachers

Actively guiding students in English teaching

To improve the effectiveness of fusing Chinese culture with English teaching, teachers are required to explore reasonable teaching methods and design syllabus finely. For example, based on the theme of the textbook, teachers can introduce Chinese cultural phenomena, customs, and words through scientific approaches. At the same time, top priority can be given to pragmatic knowledge in the unit. Teachers can create communicative situations on the difference between Chinese and foreign customs and etiquette and lead students to apply the sentences they have learned to carry out communication drills. In this way, students will be familiar with cross-cultural communication skills, understand the essence and connotation of Chinese culture, and strengthen cultural confidence. In terms of teaching means, multimedia devices are often used to assist in teaching. In the pre-class stage, media and online materials related to Chinese cultural elements are selected to stimulate students' interest in learning Chinese culture through sound, light, electricity, and pictures. Instructions to students on telling China's stories well in English classrooms should not be aimless but should be fully and scientifically preset, and progressive. For instance, before teaching students Chinese stories, teachers should first clarify their important significance and then perform teaching, which includes: (i) how to choose an excellent Chinese story genre; (ii) how to "structure" English explanations; (iii) how to evade cross-cultural communication barriers while telling Chinese stories.

Reading teaching has always been in the foreground of English teaching, which can be demonstrated by the curriculum and textbooks. According to the statistical results of the distribution of Chinese cultural content in the textbook, the most distributed share is the reading part. For example, the

"Reading and thinking" section in Unit 4 of the textbook takes "describing natural disasters" as the activity theme. It demands students to know about the devastating earthquake that occurred in Tangshan in the 1970s in China through reading, learn the language characteristics and depicting it in their own words. The activity design in the textbook consists of 7 items, which run through the entire reading teaching activity.

Activity 1 and 2 are pre-reading activities. First, activity 1 puts forward questions and guides students to consider the fallout of weighty earthquakes on cities so as to arouse students' interest in learning the content of this section. Then activity 2 naturally transitions to the title and image of the text, directing students to focus on the significant historical events. Through these two pre-reading activities, students can comprehend the titles and illustrations, and predict discourse themes and content, which exactly meets the requirements of reading skills in the curriculum standards. The arrangement of teaching activities in the while-reading section reflects the requisite skills of reading in the curriculum. The while-reading activities are activities 3-5. In activity 3, the organizational structure of the text and the context of the main events can be available to students by sorting out the main content of the five paragraphs. Besides, in activity 4, students are asked to employ reading strategies in order to guess the meaning of words in the context and grasp crucial concepts and details in the text. What's more, activity 5 underscores the repetition and application of keywords and phrases in the kindred context. Activity 6 and 7 are post-reading activities, in which activity 6 aims to enable students to "see the essence through phenomena" and cultivate their independent thinking ability by allowing them to have a deep insight and interpretation of the discourse content through questions. Activity 7 is a problem discussion, summarizing the reasons why Tangshan and cities with similar experiences can be rebuilt and revitalized in this form, discussing experiences, lessons learned, gains, and feelings. In the previous learning activity, students obtain input, and through this activity, students can profoundly explore and think about the discourse content.

Adding relevant tasks appropriately in the homework after class

"Telling China's Stories Well" in an English classroom cannot only be gratified with the content of the textbook, nor can it just remain inside the classroom. It is necessary to maintain real-time updates on the teaching content, keep up with the political, economic, social, cultural and other development at home and abroad, and always pay attention to the major focus events of the country, so that students' ideological views are aligned with the times and the continuous expansion of their horizons is promoted. On the one hand, teachers can collect related information on major events such as the National "Two Sessions" for students to conduct bilingual reading after class, and latch on the national policies and current situation. On the other hand, teachers can tell students to independently read newspapers and magazines such as the Global Times and China Daily. While learning English knowledge in national political news, students truly master the mindset and skills of letting the world understand China. Definitely, in English teaching, teachers should also play the role of guides and assistants who instruct students to accurately select the most suitable English reading materials, contributing to integrating Chinese story elements into the reading text as much as possible, and pragmatically enhancing the quality and efficiency of English learning and reading.

(2) Schools

Ushering senior students to tell Chinese stories well in English can be achieved in multiple ways. And organizing connected competitions and activities to lead senior school students to tell Chinese

stories is a feasible path. For example, on June 9, 2018, at the final of the "Future Cup" Future Speakers in Shanghai, with the theme of "Telling the World the Stories of China", 24 high school students addressed speeches in the TED form, telling Chinese stories to hundreds of Chinese and foreign audiences in English. During the speech, each contestant vividly combined the actual situation around them with their speech. Rich stories offered contained the construction of the " Belt and Road", the application of "Fuxing" bullet train, the Han costume culture and so on. In addition to the contestants, more than 30 foreign students also participated in the event through public evaluation. For similar contests, it is recommended to actively carry out them. For example, people are suggested to hold various speeches and debates to "tell the stories of China well in English".

Schools provide training relative to Chinese stories for teachers to understand how to tell Chinese stories well in English, which comprises (i) how to choose an excellent Chinese story genre; (ii) how to "structure" English explanations; (iii) how to evade cross-cultural communication barriers while telling Chinese stories.

In addition, schools can plan activities to allow students to conceive a script in advance to tell a good Chinese story in English. Then teachers give students a platform to show them separately in class. Judges are specially arranged to rate students' presentations. Indeed, this usually takes up much classroom teaching time. So English teachers need to make teaching adjustments ahead of time to afford students enough time to tell stories. If teachers do not want to occupy too much time and intend to make this practice sustainable, they can set aside a portion of time at the beginning or end of the class for the presentation.

(3) Students

Reading: According to the actual situation of students' learning, students can use the time available after class to read some English materials for primary practice, such as *Telling China's Stories in English (Basic Level)*, published by People's Publishing House. It features 23 classic Chinese stories, grouped under seven themes: traditional virtues of the Chinese nation, the four great inventions of ancient China, traditional festivals, historical figures, national landmarks, the birth of the people's song, and modern scientific and technological achievements.

Listening: Students set aside a fixed time every day to listen to the accompanying audio of China's stories. Firstly, listen while reading the written materials. Then, transition to watching, listening and reading. Once students are familiar with the story, teachers can try to use the "shadow reading" method, which means listening to the material while reading it without looking at the material. In this process, students must maintain a high level of concentration, without distractions, so as to correct and standardize their pronunciation and intonation, train their listening and speaking abilities, and enhance their language sense.

Interacting: For the problems encountered in reading, group members should be good at using collective wisdom, helping each other, and discussing and solving them. If the problems cannot be solved, the team leader can report them to the English teacher. Based on the learning difficulties and weaknesses collected from the team leader, the teacher can design and make some micro-lessons to solve and answer the problems. Moreover, some background information, pictures and videos related to the stories are appropriately supplemented. Teachers can upload micro-lessons to class WeChat groups for students to learn to help them clear up dyslexia and deepen their understanding of the stories.

Re-creation-Writing & Speaking: After the preliminary preparation, students need to fully utilize their innovative thinking and team collaboration to re-create stories, truly internalizing the learned stories into their own things and exercising their English written and oral expression abilities. After the initial draft is completed, it will be uploaded to the group's WeChat group. Members will evaluate each other, exchange their views, and then make modifications. Finally, they will rehearse according to the finalized genre to tap the performance potential of students.

Presentation-In class & After class: An elaborate rehearsal requires a wonderful platform for performance. In class, teachers can use the first five minutes of class to let students take turns sharing their creative achievements. Then the teacher makes comments on the spot, which not only tests the students' learning effectiveness but also provides them with a sense of satisfaction. After class, students can actively participate in some related subject-related activities to gain more opportunities to showcase Chinese culture in English and fully stimulate and maintain enthusiasm for learning and curiosity, such as speech contests, short-play performances, Knowledge quiz competitions, composition contests, handwriting competitions and so on.

Conclusion

General Senior High School Curriculum Standards English 2017 Edition clearly defines cultural awareness as one of the curriculum objectives, which requires students to enhance cultural confidence, form good characters of self-esteem, confidence, and self-improvement, and develop skills for cross-cultural communication and the transmission of Chinese culture. There we have discussed "How to Tell China's Stories Well in English to Innovate a New Mode of Middle School English Teaching" under the background of the new curriculum standard. What's more, we believe that integrating China's stories into English teaching can arouse the learning enthusiasm of students, mobilize their senses in all aspects, improve the efficiency of English learning and enhance their cultural confidence and high sense of national identity. To a certain extent, it is beneficial for teachers to teach students in accordance with their aptitude and promote students' personality development.

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