

A Brief Analysis on the Cultivation of Students' Cross-cultural Communicative Competence in Junior High School English Vocabulary Teaching under the Background of New Curriculum Standards

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Abstract

“Cross-cultural communication and exchange” is mentioned many times in the “Course Objectives” part of the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as the “New Curriculum Standards”). It can be seen that under the background of the New Curriculum Standards, teachers should pay attention to cultivating students' cross-cultural communicative competence. Taking the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communicative competence and junior high school English vocabulary teaching as the research object, this paper discusses the concept of cross-cultural communicative competence and the significance of cultivating students' cross-cultural communicative competence. Then, it analyzes the relationship between vocabulary teaching and cross-cultural communication, and finally proposes the specific strategies of junior high school English vocabulary teaching and the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence.

Keywords

New Curriculum Standard; Junior high school English vocabulary teaching; Cross-cultural communicative competence.

1. Introduction

Cross-cultural communication competence refers to the ability of people from different cultural backgrounds to communicate and understand each other. As more and more countries and regions have in-depth cooperation in different fields including politics, economy, culture and so on, people from all over the world have increasingly close exchanges. Cultivating students' cross-cultural communication awareness and competence can help students lay a foundation for both in-depth language learning and all-round development in their future. According to the English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2022 edition) [1], English teaching should focus on cultivating students' cultural awareness and bring cultural content into English classes, that is, emphasizing students' use of language in cultural exchanges and emphasizing the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communication ability. The traditional English vocabulary teaching model, which includes three parts: pronunciation, meaning and recitation, interspersed with some fixed collocation usage explanation. In this process, there are fewer intercultural communication teaching content which is explaining the cultural elements contained in words. The task of vocabulary learning is not only to let students read and memorize words, but more importantly, to lead students to understand the cultural connotation of words, and to understand the deep meaning of words in combination with specific contexts, so that students can apply words naturally. This paper will mainly focus on the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communicative competence and junior high school English vocabulary teaching. Firstly, it discusses the concept of cross-cultural communicative competence and the significance of cultivating students' cross-cultural communicative

competence under the background of New Curriculum Standards. Secondly, it analyzes the connection between vocabulary teaching and cross-cultural communicative competence. Then it proposes how to cultivate students' cross-cultural communication competence in junior high school English vocabulary teaching.

2. The Cross-cultural Communicative Competence

2.1. The concept

"Cross-cultural communication competence" is a complex concept with over 20 similar expressions in terms of terminology alone, and its research often involves cross-disciplinary fields. Starting from different research perspectives, the definition of cross-cultural communicative competence may be different. The widely recognized definition of cross-cultural communication competence among scholars is that people with different cultural backgrounds demonstrate cross-cultural sensitivity, flexibility and adaptability in the process of intercultural communication interaction according to the requirements of the communication context, in order to obtain appropriate and effective expected communication effects. As for the specific content of cross-cultural communication competence, some scholars have refined it into various abilities and qualities, and listed them one by one, including patience, warmth, friendliness, respect for each other, good listening ability, empathy ability, language ability, etc. However, some scholars believed that these characteristics often lack reliable scientific basis and are mostly summarized through people's experience and perception, without persuasiveness. In addition, these traits can be listed without any restrictions, and there is a lack of correlation between the traits. In the field of intercultural studies, scholars have reached a certain consensus on the components of cross-cultural communication competence. According to Lustig and Koester [2], "Cross-cultural competence requires adequate knowledge, appropriate motivation, and well-trained actions. None of these elements alone is sufficient to achieve intercultural competence." Knowledge, motivation and action constitute cross-cultural competence, and the effective combination of the three is indispensable. Imahori and Lanigan put forward that "cross-cultural communicative competence refers to the appropriate level of motivation, knowledge, and skills possessed by outsiders and locals in their communication, which leads to effective mutual relations"[3]. Bi Jiwan believed that "cross-cultural communication competence is a necessary comprehensive competence which is composed of verbal communication competence, non-verbal communication competence, language rules and communication rules transformation ability, and cultural adaptation ability in the cross-cultural communication environment"[4].

Although the definitions of the components of cross-cultural communication competence are different, among the many elements of intercultural communication competence, cognition, attitude and behavior ability are generally recognized by scholars. The communicative competence at the cognitive level means communicators not only need to master the foreign language itself, but also need to understand and master the background knowledge of the nation which use this language, including politics, economy, religion, folk customs and so on. The communicative competence at the emotional level refers to the communicator's ability to understand, tolerate and respect the cultural differences between two countries when he or she is in a different culture. The communicative competence at the behavioral level refers to the communicator's language ability, the ability to deal with interpersonal relations, and the ability to adapt to the environment. Byram added one more element to this connotation: a critical judgment of one's own culture and that of others[5].

2.2. The significance of cultivating students' cross-cultural communicative competence

Language is in a close relation with culture. In the process of English teaching, teachers should pay attention to the development of students' cross-cultural communicative competence. Combining the New Curriculum Standards and the characteristics of the development in the world nowadays, it is not difficult to find that cultivating students' cross-cultural communication ability leaves a positive impact on the improvement of students' academic quality and long-term development [6]. First of all, it helps teachers to complete the task of junior high school English teaching. The New Curriculum Standards clearly requires that junior high school students should be able to "use appropriate language to express their feelings, attitudes and opinions according to the specific situation of oral communication" and "be able to introduce the main cultural phenomena at home and abroad through oral or written English." Only with strong intercultural communication competence can students achieve appropriate language use in the process of expressing emotions and prevent confusion for the receiver of information. Therefore, it is an important task for junior middle school English teaching to cultivate students' cross-cultural communicative competence. Secondly, it helps students to participate in social activities effectively. With the increasing frequency of international exchange activities, students are likely to participate in cross-cultural communication activities in their future life and work. If students have strong cross-cultural communication skills, they can accurately understand the emotions and information transmitted by foreign friends and make appropriate responses, thus improving the efficiency and effectiveness of cross-cultural communication. Lastly, it will help promote Chinese culture to "go global". Students with good intercultural communication skills can effectively explain the excellent Chinese culture in proper language during the conversations with foreign friends, so that more foreign friends can understand China from an objective and comprehensive perspective, and enhance Chinese cultural soft power.

3. Vocabulary teaching and cross-culture communicative competence

3.1. Vocabulary and culture

Vocabulary and culture are closely related and inseparable. Usually, vocabularies contain rich cultural meanings, and culture is expressed through vocabularies. Many people think that articles and sentences are more expressive of cultural meaning, such as eastern and Western poetry. Although articles and sentences contain special culture, vocabulary contains much richer cultural meanings. Idioms, proverbs and others, which are composed of words, are special symbols of national culture and the achievements of the development of social civilization. For example, in the language and culture of Eskimo people, "snow" is a special word to express the living habits of Eskimo people; In German, "pig" means good luck. Sometimes, the number of words in the same category also reflects the particularity of culture. For example, there are many and complex kinship words in Chinese, which reflect China's clan culture. Chinese idioms are broad and profound. When taken apart, they are all common characters, but they can have different meanings when combined. As the case with Chinese, so is the language of other countries. When these words with obvious cultural characteristics are combined, they are given special cultural connotations. For example, "Birds of a feather flock together." which translates to "wu yi lei ju, ren yi qun fen". In vocabulary teaching, it is the most difficult and crucial step for foreign language learners to pay attention to the transformation of cultural meanings and memorize the meanings of transformation and extension. In order to use vocabulary accurately and appropriately, it is necessary to strengthen the study of vocabulary culture and promote the integration of vocabulary teaching and cultural teaching.

3.2. Cross-cultural communication in vocabulary

In the process of human civilization evolution, influenced by living environment, customs and historical events, words with the same connotation have different forms of expression. And different forms of expression also can point to the same meaning. For example, “ai ren” in Chinese refers to the couple or spouse, in English “lover” also has the meaning of “lian ren”. This phenomenon is called the deviation of conceptual meaning in linguistics, which is the reflection of cultural differences in language and the difference in language users’ cognition of the objective world or the social life. In addition, the cultural differences in vocabulary also manifest in terms of connotation. For example, “situation” is translated as “qing kuang” in Chinese, but in practical English use, this word not only means the “situation” happening at the moment, but also presents a “situation” with a span of time dimension. The word “individualism”, which means “ge ren zhu yi” in Chinese, is derogatory. In the Western context, individualism, like “liberty” and “Democracy”, is an integral part of Western culture. It derives not from the sum up of past experience but from abstract philosophical thinking. The cultural differences in vocabulary are numerous and complex. For English teachers, how to convey the complete meaning of cultural differences to students through vocabulary interpretation is one of the difficulties that must be overcome. Due to the particularity of the purpose of English teaching and the fact that English itself exists not only as a tool but also as a way of thinking and a channel to understand the outside world, teachers should put the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, differences in word interpretation, extended meaning and complete usage in English vocabulary and other aspects of English teaching into consideration. All of these are what teachers must emphasize in the teaching process. In the process of learning English, junior high school students should focus on these different cultural phenomena and cultural differences.

3.3. Current situation of cross-cultural communicative competence training in English vocabulary teaching

Vocabulary constructs the basic component of the structure of the language system, and its birth, evolution and stereotyping are greatly influenced by the history and culture of the region. Mei points out that in the internal system of language, vocabulary is more susceptible to the influence of social culture than pronunciation and grammar [7]. To learn the vocabulary of a certain language means to accept and understand the whole set of values behind a certain culture. Although the vocabulary in classroom teaching has changed a lot compared with the past, there are still many problems in practical teaching. (1) Teachers and students pay little attention to the cultivation of intercultural communication competence. In vocabulary teaching, teachers spend more time on teaching the fixed collocation of vocabulary and teaching students how to deal with vocabulary problems. Classroom teaching mainly serves for examination, and schools lack an evaluation system for intercultural communicative competence. In an online questionnaire survey of 365 English learners in colleges and universities in Chengdu with the theme of “Questionnaire Survey on the status quo of English vocabulary Teaching and Intercultural Communication competence Training”, 82% of the students said that English teachers occasionally explained the cultural background knowledge of vocabulary. (2) The teaching method of intercultural communication in vocabulary teaching is relatively single, which also leads to students’ lack of interest in intercultural content. Most of the teaching of intercultural communication only serves as the introduction of the class, taking up little time, and cultural explanation is only an optional part of vocabulary teaching. (3) Memorizing words in isolation. When students memorize words, they can not connect words. Besides, they do not understand the root and affix of the internal meaning, but only rely on rote memorization, which is difficult to effectively improve the English vocabulary.

4. Strategies to Cultivate Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence in Junior Middle School English Teaching under the Background of New Curriculum Standards

4.1. Improve students' pragmatic ability

The premise of cultivating students' cross-cultural communication competence is to enable students to accumulate language knowledge related to communicative topics and be able to flexibly use the knowledge to transmit information in combination with the context.

Students can't learn words without context, any vocabulary has its specific meaning. In fact, it is also a good way for teachers to encourage students to predict the meaning of words through context when reading, for the reason that with the increase of English learning difficulty, it is quite common to encounter unfamiliar words in reading. Effective and reasonable speculation on the meaning of words through context can help students no longer fear the appearance of unfamiliar words in reading and improve reading efficiency. In the English language system, many words have the same meanings, but their subtle meanings are also very different in use. For example, when learning "interested" and "interesting", if only the students are told the difference in meaning, even if they remember it, they will hardly learn to use it. In this process, teachers need to create a certain context to help students distinguish the two words and at the same time promote the use of other adjectives ending in "-ed" and "-ing".

In teaching, faced with the polysemy of a word, teachers should lead students to understand the different meanings of words with the help of different contexts. For example, the word "stand" can have many meanings in different contexts:

- (a) She was standing beside my desk staring down at me.
- (b) The temple stands alone on top of a small hill.
- (c) The nurse wound a bandage around his wounded arm. How did he stand the pain?
- (d) The growth rate now stands at 2.9 percent.

When most students say "stand", they think of "zhan li", which is the meaning of sentence (a). However, "stand" has richer meanings in other contexts, and teachers can lead students to speculate and understand one by one. Sentence (b) can be inferred from "temple" and "on a hill" that "stand" here means "(building) to be located"; Sentence (c) can infer the meaning of "ren shou" by analyzing "wounded arm", "pain" and the surprise expressed in the question itself. Combining sentence (d) with "growth rate", it can be inferred that "stand" here means "at a certain level". Sometimes teachers can also use more original English articles or movies to help students grasp the subtle semantic differences of a word in different contexts. For example, the word "fix" appears in the movie "The Boss baby", and when the brother learns that the baby will live in his house forever if he cannot complete the task, he quickly says "I know, but we have to fix this". "Fix" here no longer means "xiu li" but means "solve".

Therefore, in daily teaching, teachers need to pay attention to the development of basic training activities, so that students can understand the basic meaning and basic usage of words, internalize the learned knowledge through training, smoothly build a knowledge system, and finally improve students' pragmatic competence.

4.2. Dig deep into the cultural connotation of vocabulary

For the whole English teaching in junior high school, vocabulary is fundamental part, which is not only the basis for students to learn English knowledge, but also the premise of their listening, speaking, reading and writing, thus its importance goes without saying anything. In the new era of junior high school English vocabulary teaching, teachers should not only teach the meaning and use of words, but also introduce the English culture and focus on cultivating students' cross-cultural awareness. It is important to note that teachers should combine

specific English vocabulary and introduce cultural background knowledge in a targeted way, including living habits, cultural etiquette, stories and legends, terroir people in order to increase the accumulation of students' cultural knowledge, broaden their horizons and make them gradually enhance cross-cultural awareness [8].

Many words contain cultural connotations, but junior high school students lack the consciousness of digging deeply into the cultural connotations of words. In view of this situation, in vocabulary teaching, teachers should increase the depth of vocabulary teaching, so that students can understand more Chinese and foreign cultural knowledge through vocabulary. It should be noted that the exploration activities of the cultural connotation of vocabulary are relatively complicated. In order to arouse students' interest in participating in activities and enhance the influence of vocabulary teaching on students' intercultural communication ability, teachers can introduce cultural content related to vocabulary in an interesting way and organize students to dig deeper into the cultural connotation of vocabulary. Taking the Pep edition of Junior High School English textbook seventh grade volume I "Unit 2 Looking different" Section B "What does she look like?" vocabulary teaching as an example, students will be exposed to many words related to colors. In the development process of different nations, many colors have been given specific cultural connotations. Teachers can help students understand the cultural implications of color-related words in the following ways: (1) Introduce vocabulary exploration games. For example, after explaining color-related words such as "black", "brown" and "green", the teacher can show the vocabulary exploration game cards as shown in Figure 2 and ask the students to read the Chinese words and connect them with the corresponding English words or phrases. During the process, students may think about why the Chinese "red" is translated into "green", and explore the relationship between "melancholy" and "blue". (2) Explore the cultural connotation of vocabulary in depth. After vocabulary exploration games, teachers can ask students to analyze the cultural connotations of Chinese and Western words related to color. Such as the word "green", teachers can use ancient poems, such as "spring breeze and green river south bank". Next ask students to analyze the symbolic meaning of "green" in Chinese culture, let students extract "spring", "life" and other keywords. On this basis, teachers can share English phrases containing "green", such as "a green hand", "as green as grass", "green-eyed monster/green with envy", etc. Then ask students to associate the word "green" with elements such as "inexperience" and "jealousy". In this way, under the guidance of the teacher, students can learn more about the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures through vocabulary learning and avoid misunderstandings during information exchange.

4.3. Enrich vocabulary culture teaching methods.

After determining the content of vocabulary culture teaching, teachers should apply multiple teaching methods to present the cultural content to students, so that students can be influenced by culture in the process of acquiring vocabulary.

(1) Directly explanation method. It means that in the process of vocabulary teaching, teachers directly reveal the cultural content behind words, and help students understand the specific cultural significance behind words and learn their application rules. Take "ambitious" for example. Based on the content in the textbooks, students know the lexical meaning of this word. However, in English-speaking countries, this word has a positive connotation. In this regard, when organizing teaching activities, the teacher directly told the students that people in western countries regard success and fame as the qualities that a person must have. In the process of experiencing social life, through their own continuous efforts, they can obtain a higher social status, which is worthy of admiration. Through direct teaching of this content, students can not only construct correct cultural cognition, but also transfer life experience

independently, compare Chinese and Western cultures, find the differences between them, and establish cross-cultural awareness.

(2) Comparative analysis. The purpose of integrating cultural content into vocabulary teaching is to guide students to clarify cultural differences and develop cross-cultural awareness. To achieve this goal, teachers need to show words with the same conceptual meaning but different cultural significance in the classroom based on the teaching requirements, so that students can make comparison, figure out the cultural differences between Chinese and English, accurately master the vocabulary, and subtly develop cross-cultural awareness. For example, facing “as strong as a horse” “work like a horse” “eat like a horse”, the teacher presents different explanations of Chinese and Western countries to students in the form of tables when implementing teaching. In making the comparison, the students found that the Chinese language used to translate “horse” as “cow”. Based on this, it is natural for the teacher to present the cultural content: horses can be used for farming in English-speaking countries. However, cows play the same role in China. In this way, students can not only broaden their horizons and be influenced by culture, but also can improve their cross-cultural awareness.

(3) Communicative practice. The purpose of English teaching activities is to cultivate students' comprehensive language ability, so that students can flexibly apply their language knowledge in the process of experiencing life. The New Curriculum Standards put forward the teaching requirements of creating teaching situations and driving students' experience. Therefore, in the implementation of vocabulary teaching, in order to cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness, the teacher can create communicative situations to drive students' communicative practice. Taking the text “Home alone” from the seventh grade Volume II of Junior High School English textbook as an example, in the implementation of teaching activities, the teacher first guides students to read the textbook text by themselves in order to establish the text cognition and give full play to the subjective initiative to clear the basic language barriers with the help of a variety of tools. Then the students were asked to read the text again in small groups. In the process of reading, students need to play different roles and read separately. Reading in this way enables students to experience the specific language environment and feel different roles and emotions. Based on these, the teacher also encourages them to continue to work in groups to adapt the reading texts into dramas and deepen their understanding of the connotation of vocabulary.

4.4. Broaden the platform for exploring cultures behind the vocabulary

Under the background of “Internet + education”, many teachers have good skills in online teaching. The New Curriculum Standards also put forward the principle of “promoting the deep integration of information technology and English teaching”. Therefore, in the process of cultivating students' intercultural communication ability, students need to accumulate more extra-curricular knowledge, such as exploring ways of accurately introducing Chinese culture in English and the distinctive cultural customs of different countries. When organizing relevant teaching activities, teachers often encounter two problems: First, the classroom teaching time is insufficient, and teachers cannot deeply supplement extracurricular cultural knowledge on the basis of completing the teaching tasks in class; Second, students' interests are not uniform, and many students tend to get half the result with twice the effort when learning the content they are not interested in. To solve the above problems, teachers can use information technology to set up online classes, and multiple teachers can cooperate to design extracurricular cultural knowledge teaching topics related to the teaching content, so that students can participate in online learning activities in the way of “course selection”. In this way, students can obtain sufficient time for learning extracurricular knowledge and ensure the effect of exploring extracurricular knowledge. Take the teaching of “Unit5 China and the world” in the second volume of the ninth grade of Junior High School English of Pep edition for example. The

content of this unit is related to famous Chinese and foreign architecture, natural landscape and catering culture. Teachers can design multiple teaching themes according to the characteristics of the unit, such as “Long and Dragon” and “Tea Drinking in China and Tea Drinking in England”. and pay attention to the following two aspects: Firstly, prepare in promoting the theme. In the face of diverse topics, many students may have the problem of “no way to start”, resulting in a lack of interest in participating in online learning activities, thus affecting students’ enthusiasm for participating in online learning activities. In view of this situation, teachers need to prepare well in the promotion of online teaching topics. For example, for the topic of “Long and dragon”, teachers can ask how to translate “dragon” and provide two options of “Long” and “dragon”. In this way, students who are interested in the topic of “dragon” or the translation of Chinese and foreign culture-loaded words can choose to participate in online learning activities on this topic. During the online teaching, teachers can systematically introduce the meaning of “dragon” in Chinese culture from the perspective of translation. Secondly, guarantee the teaching effect on line. After students complete the “course selection”, teachers need to ensure the teaching effect during the online teaching. On the one hand, teachers should avoid the situation of too many students in the same online class, and if necessary, they can invite other teachers to set up new “online classes” to prevent the phenomenon of teachers being unable to answer students’ confusion in time. On the other hand, teachers should protect the enthusiasm of students to participate in online learning, invite foreign friends studying or working in China and social personnel with overseas life experience to participate in the design of online teaching content, so as to integrate more life elements, maintain students’ enthusiasm to participate in online learning activities, and let students know more about Chinese and foreign cultural knowledge in order to better cultivate students’ intercultural communication ability.

5. Conclusion

Vocabulary is the basic content of junior high school English teaching and the carrier of culture. Based on the current situation of junior high school English vocabulary teaching and the requirement of the New Curriculum Standards, junior high school English teachers should realize the importance of cultivating students’ intercultural communication ability, help students consolidate their basic knowledge in teaching practice, improve their language application ability, assist students to deeply explore the cultural connotation of vocabulary, enable students to enrich cross-cultural communication experience in the process of participating in English activities, and learn more about Chinese and foreign cultures through online learning so as to gradually improve students’ intercultural communication ability.

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