



English Education under the Context of Globalization

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Abstract

With the progress of globalization, China is forming increasing intimate relations with other nations. However, under the context of globalization, we must know each other quite well to promote cross-cultural communication, which requires that our English education follow the multi-cultural principle. On the one hand, we should know more countries who take English as their official or foreign language and their cultures. On the other hand, as China is playing a more and more important role in international affairs, we should focus more on the introducing China to people all over the world; hence, in English education, China's excellent traditional culture should also be introduced via English education.

Keywords: Globalization, Multi-cultural principle, Native culture, Foreign culture

1. Globalization

The word "globalization" first appeared in 1980s; however, its concept could date back to several decades or even centuries ago. Someone believes that globalization appeared one century ago when the Spanish, Englishmen and the Dutch established trade empire which generated the immigration of large scale. After the Second World War, the determination of western countries to consolidate international relationship becomes the foundation of current globalization. The collapse of protectionism stimulated capitals' free flow and paved a road for the appearance of cross national companies. The Internet and rapidly developing information industry further promote the world globalization process. The change of international economy exert great influence on a country's or an area's economy and a country's or an area's economy change also influences international economy. The Asia financial crisis in 1990s and current middle-east oil issue are a good prove thereto.

Economy globalization trivializes country borders and promotes the integration of markets of countries. Under the promotion of economy globalization, countries are increasingly having in-depth the political communication. The political lives of countries have something in common to some extent and the appearance of cross-national issues endows international organizations and international cooperation power with more and more power in international affairs.

Through globalization, cultures of each nation constantly break through the limit of their national cultural geography and modes by way of mutual communication, integration and compensation, go beyond national cultural border and win cultural recognition in human beings' criticism and accepting or rejecting, and continuously change national culture resources to shared resources for the humankind.

The marching of national culture to the world is a main reflection of cultural globalization. The gem and the best of national cultures are marching towards world stage and are appreciated and recognized by people of the whole world. The culture relics of specific nations have already become the treasure of the humankind.

The development of information technology provides suitable conditions for the global travel of cultures. The cross cultural communication is so prosperous thanks to the development of information and communications technology and the production and sales of cultural products is increasingly globalizing. The rapid development of network technology

provides solid platform for cultural globalization. These elements together advance national cultures of the world to freely communicate within extensive areas.

The benefits brought by globalization to human beings are obvious to all. Globalization shortens the distances among countries and areas and makes the world a global countryside. It promotes the development of world productivity, expedites the growth of world economy, and etc. However, in order to have a comfortable and easy existence and development on the earth, we need to know more about the countries and cultures lively performing on the world stage so that we could know ourselves and others well and win in all battles. It requires that in English education, we must face and accept challenges and accustom ourselves to the requirement of globalization.

2. The necessity of the coexistence of multi-cultures

With the development of globalization, some languages and cultures with stronger force spread rapidly and build their solid supreme position in world languages and culture jungles; some languages and cultures with weak force lose their vigor and energy with less and less people using them and gradually become dying or even distinguish. Such tendency is not conducive to the harmonious development of the world. As earlier as 19 July, 1937, it was pointed out in *Modern Language Teaching*, the No.11 suggestion of the sixth conference of international education conference held in Geneva, that “The aim of modern language teaching shall not only start from practice angle which is to cultivation the capacity to use language, but also and importantly, shall cultivate and make clear the education interests closely related with foreign cultures and promote the mutual understandings of different nations”. (Zhao, 1999) The concept of multi-culture education has been clearly put forward in the report in *The Contributions of Education to Culture Development* published by UNESCO in 1992 and the report also proposed that to serve all learners and citizens, this kind of education shall be designed to promote respect, mutual understanding of the diversity of cultures. “Multicultural education contains plans, courses or activities designed for all learners and these plans, courses or activities could, in education environment, promote the diversity of cultures and enhance the understanding of cultures from different groups. This kind of education could advance integration and academic success, build up international understanding and make it possible to fight against various exclusion phenomenons. Its aim is to develop from understanding their own culture, to appreciating cultures of their neighboring nations and eventually to appreciating world culture”. (Frost, 1987)

It is said in *National Words-Zheng Words* that “harmonious world generates tens of thousands of objects while if always being the same, this situation will not continue”. Nations and geography with different customs, traditions, hobbies, and religious believes constitute rich, colorful and harmonious world. The differences of nations constitute the harmonious world. Meilin Han said that “if this world does not have national features, it will be too dull”. “To combine water with water, who would like to drink it? If the musical instruments are of the same tune and sound, who would like to listen to them”? if it continues to be the same, the world will encounter the situation where “if always being the same, this situation will not continue”.

The coexistence of different civilizations is conducive to the long term and considerable progress of various multi-cultural patterns. Different civilizations could communicate and compensate each other to achieve common development, which is similar to the natural world. In the natural world, many species coexist and compete with each other, which is conducive to activating the genes of each living body so as to constantly increase their capacity of adjusting to new environment. The multi-culture patterns of human beings could provide each other theories and methods from various perspectives and activate and increase each other's creativity. The coexistent of multi-culture is beneficial for the harmony and stability of the world. The production modes, religious believes, points of views of a nation are the products of their living environment (including natural and social environment), which is to say that each civilization pattern has its root cause reason for existence. Because civilization has a corresponding relationship with its geography and people living there, culture becomes the mark for the existence of its main body (nation or national country). To deny or be against certain civilization is to, fundamentally speaking, ignore the nation or national country that creates and practices this civilization, which will certainly result in being opposed to this nation or national country and even lead to wars. Therefore, in current stage where the world is having more and more closed relationship, we should accept the reality of the coexistence of many cultures; express our respect and friendly attitude to other civilizations and civilization main bodies (nations or national countries) by means of dialogue, appreciation and mutual study. By this way, we could avoid estrangements or wars among nations or national countries resulted by civilization differences. Junren Wan, Chinese scholar pointed out, “Cultural traditions created by human beings have their external rich diversities. They are different and of various styles and are hardly possible to be unified. However, the various differences and competition of multi-cultures are not the catastrophe or tragedy of humankind. On the opposite, just these various differences and competitions constitute the true sources and power for human civilizations and create human beings and human beings' great culture. (Wan, 1999)

3. Cultural problems in current China's English education and strategies

3.1 *The lack of home nation's culture in English teaching materials*

With the constantly deepening of China's economy reform and opening up, the integrated power of China is increasing and China has become the focus of the world. The first stop of Olympic Games in China in 8 August, 2008, Shanghai World Exhibition Event, Boao Forum all prove to the world the power of China. However, it also brings us with challenges. China's economy has increasing closed relationship with world economy. As an important member of the world family, China is playing a more and more important role in world politics, economy, culture and diplomatism. It has become an important task for China's English education to help the world understand China and communicate to the world China's excellent culture and civilization. However, the existing English teaching materials in China, no matter it is for pupils or college students, are teemed with European and America senses, including western material cultures, values, customs and systems and hardly have contents about Chinese culture. However, high efficiency foreign language study depends on activating learners' learning interests and aims to train learners to use the language. To use English to describe things around learners is the key point of context teaching, which follows the principle of learning for use. (Jin, 2006).

Therefore, many Chinese scholars put forward in their papers that foreign language learning shall not only focus on target language culture. Professor Shichun Du once said, "My English learning benefits, to some extent, from Chinese learning and writing". Mr. Guozhang Xu achieved amazing achievements in linguistic researches in his late years. The reason is that he is not only a foreign language expert but also a man with profound Chinese knowledge; he keeps studying and accumulates knowledge gradually. Therefore, foreign language teachers shall consciously keep studying constantly, keep reading and writing. They shall not only improve their foreign language major accomplishments, but also improve their Chinese accomplishments and Chinese writing ability. It is said in *The Art of War* that "Know yourself and know you enemy, and you will fight a hundreds of battles with no danger of defeat". With the deepening of economy globalization, international communication is more and more frequent. If China's English education still has mother language culture lack, we could not avoid the awkward situation in cross cultural communication where "you give a peach in return for a gem". (Liu, 2008)

A professor of Stanford University made a statistical analysis. From 1986 to 1996, in the reports on China from five newspapers including *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, only one of the 12 are just and others are either unilateral or distorted or even have strong tendency of being against of China, which could be seen in the distorted reports of western media on "3.14" Tibet event. The reason is that the westerners are afraid of China's rapid development and are spreading "China threatening theory". What is more, the most westerners know few about the true situation of China and are controlled by the propaganda of the media. The author has some experience as foreign language tour guide. Through contacts with foreigners, the author found that they hardly know China. The propaganda work of China to the foreign countries is not sufficient. Materials about China are mainly routine tourism introduction on the basis of commercial base. For example, when foreigners go to visit the Terra Cotta Warriors, they would buy materials about Terra Cotta Warriors, however, these materials are only simple introduction of who discovered Terra Cotta Warriors and Terra Cotta Warriors diggings. Foreigners could only know Emperor Qin Shihuang and society, science and culture of Qin dynasty through tour guide's oral introduction. It is really a pity.

3.2 *The lack of foreign civilization and culture in English teaching materials*

Currently, English has gradually developed into a world language. More than ten countries, such as the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, are taking English as their mother language, more than 70 countries and areas take English as their second language, and more than 100 countries take English as the first foreign language in the education of various schools. About 375 million people use English as mother language and about 375 million people use English as second language. In addition, about 750 million people frequently use English as foreign language. The articles used and cultures and civilizations introduced in English teaching materials China, no matter it is for English majors or non-English major, are all about main English using countries, such as the US, the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and we could hardly see introductions on other English using countries. With the expediting of world globalization, the relationship of countries is closer and closer, which requires us to understand the customs and traditions of communication objects so as to avoid culture shock resulted from the difference of nationality, nation, and political systems.

3.3 *Corresponding strategies*

In treating western thoughts, cultures and science and technology, we have been constantly insisting on the principle of "learning from foreign countries for practice in China". This principle could also be applied to foreign teaching in China. We absorb new language culture research outcomes and at the same time, we need a suit of teaching materials suitable for foreign language teaching to express China's traditional culture with foreign language. The western world has English and American literature, the Bible and western philosophy thoughts. Then, why could not we use English to

describe China's traditional culture and literature works? We could let learners to know the English expression of Confucius who are admired also by the westerners and the English expression of the four famous works of China. The western world has books on idioms, phrases, proverb origin and various customs and festivals. Hence, we should also have works that introduce Chinese and excellent traditions of Chinese peoples. By this way, we could not only help English learners perfect their foreign language expression ability and become the envoy to spread Chinese cultures, but also provide foreigners with rich materials to understand Chinese culture so as to reach the aim of cultural communication. This is the way for Chinese foreign teaching to promote the development of science and culture career of China, to truly carry forward China's excellent cultures, and to smoothly establish the bridge and tache for international communication.

Some famous scholars in the field of foreign language field have already realized this abnormal situation and start to reexamine cultural relationship of China and the western world and to conduct reform. According to the introduction of profession Shouren Wang, when conducting course setup reform, the Department of English of Nanjing University added two courses, "western thoughts and culture" and "Chinese traditional thoughts and culture". The teaching aim of the former is to help students to have a general understanding of the development history of western civilization and basically know the basic concepts of western culture and thoughts by way of studying main works of thinkers of Greece, Rome and other western countries so as to help students deepen their ability to analyze and tell the difference of Chinese and western culture. The teaching aim of the later is to help students to further understand the soul of Chinese culture by way of studying Chinese history, philosophy and religion so as to make comparison analysis on Chinese and foreign cultures. The teaching outline of this course specially mentions that students need to "master the English expressions of Chinese culture expertly", so as to introduce China effectively and comprehensively and let foreigners understand Chinese culture. It also complies with the demand of China and world development.

For the problems brought by the lack of foreign culture, the author believes that the best solution is to open world culture appreciation and analysis course to students so as to let them have chance to appreciate excellent cultures of various countries and nations and help them overcome cultural shock in cross cultural communication.

4. Conclusion

The progress of world economy and culture globalization makes the contacts among cultures closer and closer while the sensitivity of culture is enlarging too. The diversity of cultures requires people to view and treat cultures with higher, larger and further view that goes beyond culture difference and asks people to treat education through a new multi-element view. We need to cultivate world citizens who have democratic, respect, tolerate, equal, free and understanding point of views. In order to be accustomed to the process of globalization and the increasingly important position of China in international stage, foreign language education must follow the principle of multi-cultures. For one hand, students need to fully understand the cultures and civilizations of various nations and national countries that are active on the world stage and at the same time need to inherit China's excellent traditional culture and to show it in foreign language education. Eventually, we could cultivate foreign language talents who have cross cultural communication ability. History shows that only when human beings have more extensive and open view could they understand the mutual influence degree of various nations during different eras as well as its significant functions on the history progress of human beings; only when human beings have global and entire human kind extensive view and stronger cross cultural accustoming ability could they promote the harmonious coexistence and common progress of various nations worldwide.

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