

On the Impact of Culture Differences on English Language Teaching

Wu Zhen

Tianjin Normal University, Tianjin, China

Keywords: cultural difference, English teaching, culture teaching, strategy

Abstract: Culture is a social phenomenon. Every society has its corresponding one. Because of the differences in cultural backgrounds of different countries, the ethnic groups using different languages have formed colorful cultural characteristics in the long historical process. Influenced by historical environment, geographical location, political system and economic level, Chinese and Western cultures differ greatly. It is necessary for English learners to understand the differences and try their best to overcome the influence. Language teachers are required to consciously carry out cultural teaching in the process of language teaching, try their best to guide students to understand the differences, understand the cultural background of English-speaking countries, and cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence. Therefore, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of the significance of cultural teaching in language teaching, the relationship between language teaching and culture, the influence of cultural differences on linguistics and strategies to solve them for reference.

1. Introduction

In the process of English language teaching, obstacles caused by cultural differences between China and the west are everywhere. Therefore, English language teaching must attach importance to culture teaching, introduce effective strategies into culture teaching, encourage learners to actively acquire the carrier of language - culture, and guide learners to overcome the obstacles caused by cultural differences to learning.

2. Importance of Culture Teaching in Language Teaching

Language is the carrier of culture and language can not exist without culture. While teaching language, teachers must guide learners to grasp the deep connotation of language - culture, and let them grasp the cultural background of the language they are learning, so as to achieve the ultimate goal of language teaching - the success of intercultural communication. In intercultural communication, misunderstandings caused by cultural differences are not uncommon. For example, a person who does not know Western culture may ask "Have you eaten" when he meets someone from an English-speaking country in accordance with Chinese greeting convention. However, according to Western culture, the other party may think that "would you like to invite me to dinner?" Therefore, those learning a language must learn its culture and language teaching must pay attention to the teaching of culture.

3. Relationship between English Language Learning and Culture

Language is the carrier of culture and the bridge for people to communicate. Language also reflects the differences of national cultural thinking. Different ways of thinking and different languages are expressed between China and the West, so culture is obviously different. For example, Chinese people are more accustomed to asking other people's personal questions, such as age and family problems. While people in English-speaking countries are very taboo about this. In intercultural communication, misunderstandings caused by cultural differences are very common. For example, a person who does not know Western culture may not be used to the use of Western Tableware and Table etiquette on the Table, which often makes people very unhappy. Therefore, to

learn a language, it is essential to learn the culture of language and attach importance to cultural education in language teaching. Successful mastery of a language and understanding of language and culture are closely related. English language teaching is expected to pay attention to cultural teaching, pay attention to the influence of cultural differences between China and the West, find appropriate strategies and carry out cultural teaching while English language teaching, so as to combine language teaching with cultural teaching. For example, when a person from an Anglo-American country greets you, he will say “How are you said”. You may just mechanically answer “I’m fine, thank you, and you?” These are all the reasons why children are unable to learn English well.

4. Impact of Cultural Differences on English Teaching

4.1 Influence of Cultural Differences on English Vocabulary Teaching

Vocabulary is an integral part of cultural information and the most critical part of language. It reflects the development and diversity of culture, as well as cultural differences. For example, “watergate” refers to any high-level political scandal. Without its cultural connotation, it is difficult to understand its true connotation. Teachers are expected to introduce the culture of the word when teaching such words, that is, the origin, extension and application of the word. Meanwhile, it is also suggested to introduce words derived from “Watergate”, such as “Billygate”, “Dabategate” (Debate Gate) and so on, which not only improves learners’ interest in learning, but also guides learners to master more vocabulary. The above example reflects the influence of cultural context on English vocabulary teaching. Teachers are expected to explain the cultural background behind some words to students as much as possible when teaching vocabulary. Some Chinese vocabulary and English vocabulary express different meanings, which is why there is “Chinglish”. However, sometimes, there are no words in English corresponding with Chinese expressions at all. For example, words like 辣条, 麻辣烫. In addition, Chinese expressions of kinship are more complex, such as 姑姑, 舅舅, 姨姨 and so on, which are only expressed by aunt in English, 爷爷 and 外公 are expressed by Grandpa, and 奶奶 and 外婆 are expressed by Grandma.

4.2 Influence of Cultural Differences on Listening Teaching

In the process of listening learning, we often find some seemingly simple materials, among which there are no difficult words, but it is difficult for students to understand. It is largely due to cultural differences. For example, here is a conversation like this.

M: Please buy two packs of cigarettes for me while you are at the store.

W: I’m not going to any store. I’m going to see Aunt Mary. But I’ll get them for you at the gas station.

If learners do not understand the cultural background of English language and do not know that in “gas station”, cigarettes and other daily necessities are also sold, they will probably make mistakes in listening comprehension.

4.3 Influence of Cultural Differences on the Teaching of Reading and Translation

English learners’ reading ability and translation level depend on their language knowledge, vocabulary while reading skills also depend on the mastery of language and culture. When some English learners come across a sentence like “I’m on my way to take my examinations. Keep your finger crossed for me.” They often don’t know what it means. In fact, the phrase “keep your finger crossed” comes from the Western custom that crossing the index finger on the middle finger expresses the hope that someone will get good luck. It can be translated as “为我祈祷，祝我好运”. Here is another example about learner who does not understand the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. When English learners encounter such sentences as “you are a lucky dog”, it is often difficult for them to get the true meaning. “Dog” is often used in derogatory meanings in Chinese, such as “狐朋狗友”, “狗急跳墙” and other idioms, but in Western English-speaking countries, “dog” is the most loyal friend of human beings. It can be seen that without understanding

cultural differences, it is difficult to read and translate smoothly, and the true meaning of language can not be understood correctly.

5. Specific Measures for Improving Cultural Differences in English Teaching

(1) Seize appropriate time, expand the content of classroom teaching and introduce relevant culture. For example, when teaching words like “thanksgiving” and “Christmas”, teachers should not only simply explain the meaning of words, but also pay attention to explaining their cultural connotations, introducing the origin of these festivals, celebration methods and so on. This will not only increase the interest of classroom and stimulate students’ enthusiasm for learning, but also enable students to master certain cultural knowledge.

(2) Study cultural differences, guide learners to transfer their mother tongue positively and eliminate negative transfer. There are some similarities between English and Chinese. For example, the pronunciation of some words in English is basically similar to that in Chinese, as well as the expressions of some words in English, such as full-time job, all one’s heart, etc. English grammar and syntactic structure also have similarities. For these similarities, language teachers are required to guide students to transfer the characteristics of their mother tongue to English learning. Negative transfer of mother tongue to second language learners can also lead to mistakes made by language learners. Negative transfer is often caused by cultural differences between mother tongue and English. Teachers should guide English learners to eliminate negative transfer.

(3) Be widely involved in classical British and American literary works and film and television works. Literary works and film and television works are the reflections of social culture in a certain period of time. Through extensive reading of classical literary works and watching of movies and TV works, learners are able to have a deep understanding of British and American cultural background, social customs, social relations and other aspects of knowledge. Meanwhile, they can exercise their oral English ability. Teachers also need to guide learners to contact more original works such as British and American classical literature, movies and TV, recommend some works embodying the culture of English-speaking countries to learners, and strengthen the promotion of extracurricular reading materials and classic film and television works. In extra-curricular time, learners will gain a deeper understanding of cultural background of the UK and deepen their interest in language learning by reading famous English and American literary works and films and television works. Teachers are also required to actively recommend some classical English learning materials to students.

(4) Use modern teaching methods to display Western culture in an all-round way. The development of modern educational technology and network makes teaching more colorful. Multimedia teaching combines words, sounds and images, which vividly shows all aspects of the target culture. A large number of rich and colorful network resources also provide convenience for language teaching and learning. For example, the Open Course of Netease on the Internet provides some open courses of famous universities abroad, through which learners can also learn and feel the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. Teachers are suggested to properly expand the customs of Western festivals when teaching Western festivals. For example, in the teaching of “April Fool’s Day”, teachers are advised to introduce the whole Western means of April Fool’s Day, and show with pictures to achieve better effect.

(5) The process of learning a foreign language is a process of intercultural language communication. Without understanding etiquette, norms, values and cultural backgrounds of each other, the expected learning objectives can not be achieved. In daily life, Chinese people’s etiquette communication has naturally introduced such as “ok”, “bye-bye” and so on. These spoken languages have become the common spoken language of Chinese people. Therefore, in learning English, students should accumulate more practical vocabulary and sentences. Sometimes the sentences and vocabulary encountered in the classroom or examination papers may not be able to be applied in life. Therefore, in the process of learning English or other foreign languages, students are expected to try their best to avoid and overcome this embarrassing situation. Usually, it is needed to read more original English literary works. It is advised to invite some foreign friends to chat with

and then try to understand other people's speaking habits, lifestyle, daily culture and so on without mechanical teaching in class.

6. Conclusion

To learn a language, one must learn its culture. In language teaching, one must attach importance to the teaching of culture. Whether one can master a language or not is closely related to the degree of cultural understanding. Therefore, English language teaching should pay attention to cultural teaching, stress the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, attach attention to its impact on language teaching, strive to overcome its impact, and find countermeasures to combine language teaching with cultural teaching, thereby learning English well.

References

- [1] Ai Xiaoqin. Impact of Cultural Differences between East and West on College English Teaching [J]. Science and Technology Economic Market, 2016 (02): 225.
- [2] Du Hui. Impact of Cultural Differences between China and the West on English Language Teaching and Its Countermeasures [J]. Crazy English (Theoretical Edition), 2016 (04): 42-44.
- [3] Liu Jing. Influence of Cultural Differences between China and the West on Etiquette Culture Education in English Teaching [J]. Modern Education, 2015 (10): 51-53.
- [4] Wang Yunxian, Hu Yuhui. Influence and Function of the Cultural Differences between Chinese and Western Tea on English Cross-cultural Teaching [J]. Fujian Tea, 2016, 38 (12): 200-201.
- [5] Yu Hui. Impact of Tea Cultural Differences on Innovative Teaching in English Classroom [J]. Fujian Tea, 2017, 39(12): 325.
- [6] Zhao Shubo. Influence of Tea Culture Differences on Innovative Teaching in English Classroom [J]. Fujian Tea, 2017, 39(11): 197-198.