

HOW TO INFILTRATE CHINESE CULTURE INTO LANGUAGE TEACHING OF CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Culture is closely related to language. Language is both: a part of culture and the informational development of culture. As a part of world culture, Chinese culture has been handed down, continued and developed. Chinese culture should be infiltrated into language teaching of Chinese as a foreign language.

1. Views on meaning of Culture for Chinese scholars

There is a process of understanding the meaning of culture from less to better understanding about views on meaning of Culture for Chinese scholars.

The word Culture had first appeared in *Shuoyuan*, written by Liu Xiang (born in 77 B.C. and died in 6 B.C.) a famous historian in West Han Dynasty in Ancient China. He thought:

“Fan wu zhi xing, wei bufu ye; Wenhua (That is Culture, the author gives this explanation) bu gai, Ranhou jiazhu.”

In this sentence culture is opposite to military force and its meaning was mostly civil administration and indoctrination. This understanding had been influenced till Qing Dynasty (Cheng Yuzhen 2003; 2).

In modern China, many famous scholars discussed the concept of Culture. They gave to Culture a multi-dimensioned understanding. Some of the main classical views are listed below:

Culture is the condition of the development of human life.

Cai Yuanpei 1920: What Is Culture

Culture is solutions to solve problems of the human life.

Liang Shuming 1935: The Eastern and Western Cultures and Philosophy

The so-called culture is the nature that has been moulded by the human spirit.

He Lin 1947: Culture and Life

In contemporary China, sociologist Sima Yunjie thinks that Culture is a complex whole which consists of peculiarities of different shapes created

by human being (Sima Yunjie 1987: 4–6). This concept includes all the contents of the life of human beings.

Compared with Liu Xiang's opinion of culture, modern and contemporary scholars covered a wide and broad range on culture, which is thought to include all the matter of life of human being.

As an authoritative dictionary in China, *The Contemporary Chinese dictionary* (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 2002: 2006) defines Culture:

There are three definitions of culture:

a. Civilization and culture sum total of the material wealth and cultural wealth created by man in the course of the historical development of society, cultural wealth in the particular, such as literature, arts, education, and science, etc.;

b. It is an archaeology comprehensive body of sites and ruins left behind, which are independent of their locations, in a given historical period. The identical tools, implements and manufacturing skills are the characteristics of the same culture, as the Yangshao culture and the Longshan culture;

c. The abilities of handling or commanding the languages and common knowledge, cultural & educational level.

Culture mentioned in this paper is the meaning of c., that is the abilities of handling or commanding the languages and common knowledge, cultural and educational level.

2. The advocacy and taboos of Chinese culture

2.1. Regard to symbolic animals

The twelve symbolic animals represent the 12 Earthly Branches and are associated with a 12-year cycle, used to denote the year of a person's birth. The twelve animals are: rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, cock, dog, and pig. The twelve symbolic animals have emerged in the ancient Pre-Qin dynasty (from 221 B.C. to 207 B.C.) (Cheng Yuzhen 2003: 374).

Chinese people have different attitudes toward the twelve animals. Generally speaking, they like large-sized animals, such as the Chinese dragon, tiger, horse and ox, more than small-sized animals such as rat, cock. In Contemporary China, the Chinese dragon is the most popular animal and the sheep is the worst animal in their minds. The birth rate of population in the year of the Chinese dragon is much more than in the year of the sheep.

2.2. Regard to numerals

Numerals have emerged earlier. Five thousand years ago, there emerged depicted signs of numerals in the primitive communes in Ancient China (Chang Jingyu 1995: 153). The numeral not only has the function of counting the numbers but also the abundant cultural meaning.

For example, figure 1, which Chinese people hold in esteem, means unity, wholeness and sameness and it is the origin and the mother of myriad things in the world. The famous sentence in Tao Te Ching written by Laozi (born from 571 B.C, died in 471 B.C.) is “Tao sheng yi, yi sheng er, er sheng san, san sheng wanwu” (Tao Te Ching: Chapter 42). It means: tao produces one, one produces two, two produce three, and three produce the world. Figure 1 is the root.

In ancient China, the figures 3 and 5 are both lucky numbers. In the vocabulary there are many things consisting of three or five parts. “Tian Di Ren” three endowments, (means Sky, Field and People), “Ri Yue Xing” three celestial bodies, (means Sun, Moon and Star), “Jin Mu Shui Huo Tu” five elements (means Gold, Wood, Water, Fire, Earth and “Dong Xi Nan Bei Zhong” five directions (means East, West, South, North, Middle). The vocabulary has some words included in figure 3 and 5 (Chinese pronunciations are Sān and Wǔ). For example, “Shì bù guò sān” means the same things can not be done for three times, “Sān sī ér hòu xíng” means to think more times before doing something, figure 3 in this phrase means many times; “Sān shēng yǒu xìng” means a lot of luck, and figure 3 here includes three lives, that is prelife, this life and future life according to Buddhism; “Wǔ fu lín mén” means that five good fortunes will come which are: the long life, riches and honour, health and safeness, good morality and serene and liberal death; “Wǔ gǔ fēng dēng” means good harvest year and “Wǔ gǔ” refers to five cereals. Nowadays, figures 6 and 8 are more popular in Chinese culture. Figure 6 implies smooth going and figure 8 implies owning more money.

Different figures mixed in different phrases have different meanings. For example, if figure 7 (Chinese pronunciation is qī) and 8 (Chinese pronunciation is bā) are in one phrase, then the phrase often implies disorder, irregularity, untidiness. These phrases are “Qī shǒu bā jiǎo”, “Qī niǔ bā wā”, “Qī shàng bā xià”, “Luàn qī bā zāo”, etc.

2.3. Regard to colours

Red and White colours represent the Chinese people’s advocacy and taboos. The red colour is an auspicious colour. It lets people think about sun

and flare. The red colour mostly includes all good contents, such as jubilation, as one wishes, auspiciousness, success, etc. On wedding ceremony, red flowers adorn the breasts of bride and bridegroom. Red colours adorn everywhere in the ceremony, red clothes, red bags, red fireworks, etc. The white colour in Chinese culture has just the same meaning of pureness and elegance as in European culture, but mostly the meaning of the white colour is negative in Chinese culture. It implies failure, foolishness, fierceness, cruelty and death. The white colour is always used in funeral ceremonies.

Some colours such as yellow, green and black have their own cultural meaning. For example, yellow implies imperial authority, dignity and loftiness. It stands for the emperor in Ancient China. With the development of society, yellow has its new contemporary implication. The yellow colour implies obscenity gradually because obscenity contents were published in the yellow paper in America since 18 centuries (Chang Jingyu 1995: 167).

2.4. Regard to names

Name is both a signal of a person's and his or her family in Chinese society and a mark of blood relationship. With the process of its formation, development and evolution, the name is one of the most important parts of Chinese culture. The Chinese name has emerged in the Ancient Age. Chinese family names are related to totems. The Chinese have been giving a particular eye on nameology from ancient to present. There are many methods about how to give a person a typical Chinese name from the aspects, such as his or her symbolic animal, born year, character, hobby, ambition and even his or her parents' wishes. Typical Chinese names consist of two parts, the first one is his or her family name, the second one is his or her personal name. Most of the Chinese family names are single surname and consist of only one Chinese character. There also exist some double family names. Currently, there exist only over 250 family names compared with over 3000 family names widespread use in Han Chinese (He Xiaoming 2001: 81).

The Chinese personal name consists of one or two Chinese characters. So the typical Chinese name consists of two or three Chinese characters. Chinese people have their own formal names and nicknames. The former are used in formal occasions, such as school, organization and etc., the latter are used in family, relatives, etc. According to Chinese laws, a child can use either his or her father's family name or mother's family name. Most of the children have the same family names as their fathers.

3. Infiltrating Chinese culture into language teaching of Chinese as a foreign language

For Chinese as a foreign language, Chinese culture is one of its most important parts. Teachers should adopt effective methods in order to infiltrate it into the Chinese language teaching.

3.1. The principle

3.1.1. Pertinence

All successful teaching depends on learning. The teachers will always be less effective than they could be (Vivian 2008: 1–3) without an understanding of why people need to learn other languages. It is also important how other language knowledge is stored and learned. Therefore, teachers should know learners' condition, such as their culture, native languages, the interests of Chinese language learning and etc.

According to learners' culture background, learners can divide into Asian groups and non-Asian groups. Asian learners and non-Asian learners have different background, motivation of learning Chinese, acquisitions, so teachers should adopt different teaching strategies for different mother language learners. For example, teachers should adopt different strategies regarding the Chinese names of learners whose nationalities are Japanese and Korean (whose names are similar to Chinese names), and learners whose nationalities are European (whose names are absolutely different). In this condition, teachers should explain more Chinese name culture to the latter learners than the former learners and can adopt antitheses to strengthen the understanding of Chinese name culture. Therefore effective strategy should be adopted for different culture learners and different needs.

3.1.2. Equality

Every country and region has different culture characteristics. There is neither good nor bad culture. So teachers should avoid causing the learners' dissatisfaction and resistance in understanding their own nationality's culture and the Chinese culture. For example, in understanding the advocacy and taboo in Chinese culture, teachers should place extra emphasis on the understanding of the white and yellow colour and avoid causing misunderstanding that the white colour indicates bereavement.

3.1.3. Interest

Different learners have different reasons for learning Chinese. To a certain extent, some Asian learners learn Chinese language in order to find a

good job. Some European learners just like Chinese culture and Chinese, so that is why they study the language. For example, in a survey, 70% of the Bulgarians who had been tested think that they want to learn Chinese, because they are interested in Chinese culture and Chinese language (Sun Yonghong 2008: 55). Based on this condition, teachers should know clearly about the interests of learners and teach in the most intriguing way. And some surveys should be taken by teachers in order to understand what kind of Chinese culture the learners are interested in.

3.1.4. Gradualness

Different learners have different starting points, learning competence and different methods. The human being's acceptance ability is from low to high and from simple to more complicated for every learner. This way the teachers should consistently follow the principles for gradual progress.

3.2. The teaching methods of infiltrating Chinese culture into the Chinese language teaching

New ideas of foreign language teaching are that treating learners as persons in society within a certain range of specific social action, who under specific conditions and circumstances are to accomplish various tasks (Council of Europe 2008: 9). Foreign language teaching should carry out teaching actions in the specific condition. So, teachers should give the specific task within specific conditions for class and guide learners to accomplish it. Then in the process of accomplishing the tasks, Chinese culture can be infiltrated into the ways of teaching.

Language action of teaching action is divided in four types: reception, production, interaction and mediation (Council of Europe 2008: 14). According to the principle and ideas above, some language teaching methods should be taken in infiltrating Chinese culture into the Chinese language teaching.

3.2.1. Communication Approach

Any language is systematic. Teachers can adopt communication approach in their classrooms in order to improve learners' understanding of Chinese culture and also learners to express their own ideas on Chinese. For example, a survey on what kind of Chinese culture you would like to know initially can be taken in order for learners' opinions and ideas to be collected. A correspondence between each of the colleagues in Chinese language should also exist. After knowing those, teachers explain to the learners specificities of Chinese culture that they like to know. Teachers can appoint some learners

to take charge of holding debating discussion or other actions that lead to expression of the learners' opinions.

3.2.2. Comparison Approach

All the foreign language learners, no matter how old they are and what native languages they speak have their own customs and habits. Comparison of the foreign languages' culture with their own culture will let them know clearly the differences and similarities between two cultures. For example: Chinese names and European names are absolutely different. In the process of European learners teaching, the teacher can translate their own names into Chinese characters according to transliteration. The learners can know their names' pronunciation in Chinese. Based on the teacher's talking with them about their hobbies and interested matter, traditional Chinese names can be given to them. In the process of teaching, the teacher explains the Chinese names' form and meaning. Further, the teacher allows every learner to use his or her own name to make sentences or write down his Chinese name. Another way of Chinese names learning is to have a simple conversation between partners using their names. The same approach can be adopted to understand Chinese colour culture and Chinese number culture.

3.2.3. Performance Approach

Learners attending to the teaching action can arouse their enthusiasm and reinforce their memory about Chinese culture and Chinese language. This approach is typical mode of both language reception and production. For example, in order to let learners know the twelve symbolic animals, the teacher can tell them all the animals' names in Chinese and their own animals' name. Then, to learners can be given a homework that is to search for the Chinese symbolic animals and a selection of the animals which the learner likes the most. In the classroom, learners can be divided into different groups according to some rules. Each group can perform a play prepared before the class. They also can play some games at the same time. Learners are class-centers and teacher is class-director. Learners can both learn Chinese language and get knowledge to express themselves in the process of Chinese teaching while understanding the Chinese culture.

4. Conclusion

Culture and language are related and promote each other. Infiltrating Chinese culture into Chinese language teaching is in order to improve learners' Chinese comprehension and ability of expression. Chinese language teach-

ing should adopt more effective methods to accomplish the teaching tasks with different learners who have their own conditions.

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