

**CULTURE-EDUCATION IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN CHINA:
THE CURRENT SITUATION AND THE WAY FORWARD**

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ABSTRACT

EFL teachers in Chinese universities have long ignored the development of students' intercultural communicative competence. The result is that the latter still find themselves at a loss when they communicate directly with native English speakers, even after years of English study. What and how to teach 'culture' in foreign language education is a problem faced by language educators in China. This paper is concerned with culture in Chinese College English and reports on the current state of culture-related teaching in China. The results reveal the inadequacies of 'culture' education at the present time in Chinese colleges and universities. On the basis of both the findings from this investigation and her experience of teaching English in Chinese universities, the author proposes ways to improve the teaching of culture in Chinese College English Teaching.

Keywords: Culture-education; College-level English; Intercultural communicative competence

RESUMEN ABSTRACTO

Los maestros de ESL (inglés como segundo idioma) de universidades en China han ignorado por mucho tiempo la competencia comunicativa intercultural de sus estudiantes. El resultado es que éstos últimos se encuentran perdidos cuando se comunican directamente con parlantes nativos del inglés, aún cuando han estudiado inglés por años. Qué y cómo enseñar "cultura" de un idioma extranjero es un problema al cual se enfrentan los educadores del idioma en China. A este trabajo le concierne la cultura en los colegios Chinos de inglés e informa el estado actual de la enseñanza relacionada a la cultura en China. Los resultados revelan la inadecuada enseñanza "cultural" al presente en los colegios y universidades en China. Basado en ambos lugares, los hallazgos de esta investigación y la experiencia adquirida en la enseñanza del inglés en universidades en China, la autora propone formas de mejorar la enseñanza de la cultura en colegios que enseñan inglés en China.

Palabras clave: Educación cultural; inglés a nivel de colegio, competencia comunicativa intercultural

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Introduction

In foreign language teaching in Chinese colleges, teachers train students to develop the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, and have clearly met with some measure of success. However, despite having good pronunciation and producing grammatically correct sentences, students and young interpreters often speak inappropriately. The reason for this is that traditional methodology - a teacher-centered, book-centered, grammar-translation method - has dominated in the Chinese classroom for a considerable period of time. English-as-a-Foreign Language (EFL) teachers have placed great emphasis on the components of the language itself, i.e., the sounds, the words, and the grammatical structures, neglecting the cultivation of the students' intercultural communicative competence, or cultural awareness. Thus, after years of English language study, students still find themselves unable to communicate effectively with native English speakers.

Recognition of the importance of teaching 'culture' in foreign language education can be traced back to the late nineteenth century (Sweet, 1889), but it was not until quite recently that the importance of 'culture' teaching in foreign language teaching became widely acknowledged (Hymes, 1972, 1996; Kramsch, 1991; Straub, 1999). It has become evident that cultural competence is an integral part of communicative competence. Accordingly, it is necessary for all English teachers and learners to have a better understanding of this aspect of learning. Teachers need to realize that simply teaching the language itself is insufficient and

that the cultivation of students' cultural awareness is also an important part of language teaching and learning. Students must also be made aware of its importance. In this way, English teaching and learning can not only be effectively improved but also made more enjoyable. To achieve this goal, cultural knowledge should be included in Teaching English-as-a-Foreign Language (TEFL) programs. This study was undertaken in order to cast light on the present situation of the teaching of 'culture' in the Chinese College context, and to discuss the cultural implications for Chinese College English education. While the primary focus of language teaching should unquestionably be on elementary linguistic knowledge, the teaching of culture cannot be overlooked and needs to be integrated into the teaching.

Literature Review

Since the 1960s, with the development of sociolinguistics and foreign language teaching research, more and more attention has been directed to the relationship between language and culture, and language teaching and the teaching of culture. Kaplan (1966) carried out one of the most influential studies of intercultural communication in the U.S., in which he attempted to interpret the effects of cultural elements in Foreign Language Learning (FLL). A great many educators have concerned themselves with the importance of the cultural aspect in FLL, Hymes (1972), Hammerly (1982), Seelye (1984) and Damen (1987) being among those who have considered ways of incorporating culture into language teaching. Hymes (1972) pointed out that the use and analysis of language are inseparable from society, specific sociological situations, the interlocutors' social backgrounds and identities, and the social meanings that are 'encoded linguistically' with cultures. He first introduced the notion

of ‘communicative competence’, which has had a great impact on second language research and teaching methodologies. Lado (1964), Valette (1977), and Hammerly (1982) set out the goals in learning a foreign language and their pedagogic cultural implications. Handy (1976) described culture teaching as establishing the link between the mother tongue culture and that of the target language. Hanvey (1979) noted that there are four levels of intercultural awareness: (a) level 1 is awareness of superficial cultural traits often interpreted as exotic or bizarre; (b) level 2 is awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one’s own and are interpreted as unbelievable and irrational; (c) level 3 is similar to level 2, but the cultural traits are recognized as believable through intellectual analysis; and (d) level 4 is awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider and is the hardest to achieve.

In the 1980s, scholars began to delve into the dynamics of culture and its vital contribution to ‘successful’ language learning (Byram, Morgan et al., 1994). Research on cultural influence in second or foreign language teaching focused on the effects of body language, eye contact, and other overt behavioral and communicative paradigms. Many classroom teachers and language teaching methodologists have described appropriate techniques for addressing cultural behaviors while teaching second language linguistic skills.

In the 1990s, the importance of one’s own culture in EFL began to be recognized.

Byram et al. (1994), stated that

...learners cannot simply shake off their own culture and step into another; their culture is a part of them and created them as social beings. Learners are ‘committed’ to their culture, and to deny any part of it is to deny something within their own being. (p. 43)

They noted that the foreign language classroom should become a ‘cultural island’, where the accent is on ‘cultural experience’ rather than ‘cultural awareness’. According to Straub (1999), what educators should always have in mind when teaching culture is the need to raise their students’ awareness of their own culture, to provide them with some kind of metalanguage in order to talk about the culture, and “to cultivate a degree of intellectual objectivity essential in cross-cultural analyses” (p. 5). Kramsch (1991) emphasized that research and language teaching need to link “the teaching of language to that of culture” (p. 236).

In China, scholars have also paid great attention to culture teaching in TEFL classrooms. Wenzhong (1999) argued that there is a close relationship between cultural differences and foreign language teaching. He (1998) mentioned two levels of English culture teaching, cultural knowledge and cultural understanding, and advocated that learners should develop cultural awareness to reach a level of cultural understanding that focuses on refining learners’ communicative abilities.

In recent decades, English language learning in China has continued to expand, the ever increasing communication with outside countries leading to a greater knowledge of and understanding of other cultures. However, writing almost a decade ago, Ailing (2001) found that the teaching of culture was not of a satisfactory standard. The aim of the investigation reported in the next section was to see if this is still the case.

Methodology

In order to obtain first-hand data and information about the current situation related to culture teaching in Chinese colleges and universities, the researcher conducted an

investigation involving a wide range of students of different educational levels and from a variety of disciplines. This research was undertaken in the hope that it would lead to constructive suggestions for culture teaching in College English teaching in China.

Research Questions

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the current state of students' social culture awareness and competence?
- (2) What is the current state of the classroom teaching of culture?
- (3) What are the ways in which culture might best be taught?

Subjects

Subjects in this study involved English teachers and undergraduates from three institutions in different parts of China (1) Three Gorges University, (2) Zhanjiang Normal College, and (3) Huahai Professional Institute. Ten teachers offered their help in the present research, all of whom have had more than five years of English teaching experience.

Altogether, 367 undergraduates were randomly chosen from different disciplines and from all four years. They came from many different parts of China and had very varying family and study backgrounds, cognitive styles and life experiences. They are therefore representatives of the majority of foreign language learners in higher education in China. Information about the subjects is set out in Table 1.

Instruments

The instruments employed were a socio-cultural test, a questionnaire and a teachers'

interview. The test consisted of two parts (see Appendix A). Questions in the first part were designed to test the students' performance in respect of non-verbal behavior such as gestures, etiquette, etc., while questions in the second part were designed to examine their mastery of

Table 1: *The Proportional Distribution of the Subjects*

	Number	Percentage
Distribution of the subjects by institution		
Three Gorges University	135	36.8%
Zhanjiang Normal College	110	30%
Huahai Professional Institute	122	33.2%
Total	367	100%
Distribution of the subjects by discipline		
English	82	22.3%
Applied Computer Technology	53	14.4%
History	46	12.5%
Tourism	45	12.3%
Chemical Engineering	49	13.4%
Mathematics	47	12.8%
Art	45	12.3%
Total	367	100%
Distribution of the subjects by year		
First-year students	83	22.6%
Second-year students	120	32.7%
Third-year students	92	25.1%
Fourth-year students	72	19.6%
Total	367	100%

verbal behavior such as exchanging greetings, addressing others, asking for help, expressing gratitude, etc., when communicating with native speakers of English. Each question was placed within a specific social context of daily communication. The subjects who achieved high scores were considered to have a high degree of cultural knowledge; the reverse was the case for those who achieved low scores.

The socio-cultural test was designed in accordance with a sociolinguistic framework of what constitutes communicative competence (Zhenya, 1990; Ziran, et al., 1994), while all of the items in the test were devised to incorporate the socio-cultural factors that define the nature and realization of an interaction. The test was therefore considered to be valid in terms of content. In this way, the author hoped to obtain a reasonably accurate assessment of the current state of students' cultural knowledge.

The questionnaire was intended to discover the students' understanding of what is meant by 'culture' learning and their attitudes towards it, as well as their preferences and suggestions in regards to culture teaching (see Appendix B). There were two parts, the first part consisting of multiple-choice questions, while in the second part students were required to answer two open-ended questions. The questions followed a logical sequence and were the outcome of discussions with the colleagues of the author. As indicated earlier, all the students were chosen from different segments of the population so that the results of the questionnaire would be reliable.

An interview was given to four teachers of Three Gorges University. In the interview the author discussed their attitudes towards culture teaching, their perceptions of the present textbooks and the current state of culture teaching. The interview aimed to enrich the data collected from the questionnaire. A sample of the interview questions is contained in Appendix C.

Data Collection

Many teachers volunteered to take part in this research. They helped to organize the

groups of students, to distribute the questionnaires and socio-cultural test papers and to explain each item. Additionally, they supervised the students to ensure that they finished the questionnaires and the test papers in the required time. All the students finished the papers on time and as required with the help of the teachers. The interview data were recorded by the author to guarantee the accuracy of the analysis.

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. Both the socio-cultural test and the questionnaire tested quantitatively the students' understanding of culture learning and teaching and their degree of knowledge of English culture. The data from the multiple choice questions related to their knowledge of the culture and were obtained both by counting and by using a computer to avoid the possibility of error. As the two open-ended questions in the questionnaire explored the students' understanding of classroom learning, the qualitative analysis was adopted. The analysis for the interview was also qualitative. The teachers provided additional and important information in the interview.

Results and Discussion of the Socio-cultural Test

There were 30 questions in the test, allowing a full score of 30. The students' scores were grouped into three categories: 20-30, 10-20, and 0-10. The results of the three categories were then converted into percentages. The highest score was 24 while the lowest was 5. The following table shows the results of the test for the three categories.

Table 2: *The Results of the Socio-cultural Test*

Scores	Students	Percentage of Sample
20--30	28	7.6%
10--20	148	40.4%
0--10	191	52%

From Table 2, we can see the current situation in respect of the cultural knowledge of Chinese university and college students. Although items on the socio-cultural test were designed based on common features of daily communication, there were still very few students who obtained a relatively high score. The percentage of students who scored above 20 was very low, with the majority of the students falling into the lowest range. These values clearly indicate that the cultural knowledge of the students is generally poor.

Results and Discussion of the Questionnaire

The responses to multiple-choice questions in the questionnaire are shown in Table 3. Regarding culture teaching in class, most students did not think they received adequate culture teaching and that the teachers usually focused on the teaching of grammar and vocabulary (See the responses to questions 2 and 3). In respect of their performance in communicating with English native speakers, they generally felt dissatisfied. A majority of the students regarded their performance as ‘poor’, and realized that the main obstacle to communication is insufficient understanding of English cultures (see the responses to questions 5 and 6). However, they were very interested in learning about English cultures and thought that cultural knowledge can enlarge their view of the outside world (see the responses to questions 1, 7, and 8).

In response to the first open-ended question: “What do you think is important in

culture teaching?”, the following are the most frequently mentioned: cultural differences, festivals and holidays, people’s way of life, sports, music, customs, etiquette, society, education, food, body language, people’s values, and taboos.

Table 3: *The Responses to Multiple-choice Questions in the Questionnaire*

Choice Numbers & their Percentage Questions	Answers		
	A	B	C
1	353 (96.1%)	3 (0.9%)	11 (3%)
2	46 (12.5%)	138 (37.6%)	183 (49.9%)
3	10 (2.7%)	200 (54.5%)	157 (42.8%)
4	30 (8.2%)	301 (82%)	36 (9.8%)
5	0 (0%)	135 (36.8%)	232 (63.2%)
6	120 (32.7%)	46 (12.5%)	201 (54.8%)
7	265 (72.2%)	102 (27.8%)	0 (0%)
8	14 (3.8%)	77 (21%)	276 (75.2%)

When answering the second open-ended question: “What ways do you like to learn about culture?”, most students expressed their preference for extensive reading, visual aids (especially English tapes and films), listening to music, pictures, stories, role-playing, and personal contact with native speakers.

The responses to the questionnaire indicate that the present state of both culture teaching and culture learning is far from satisfactory. However, the students have a positive attitude towards culture learning and are most interested in learning how English-speaking people live, what their customs are and in what ways English cultures are different from their own.

Results and Discussion of the Teachers' Interview

Four English teachers of Three Gorges University were chosen for the interview. All have had English teaching experience of more than ten years and all have a Bachelor's degree or a Master's degree. Each teacher was given about 15 minutes for the interview. Through the interview, the author hoped to find out their attitude towards culture teaching and the current state of culture teaching practice, as well as their reflections on the present textbooks. The following are their perceptions as revealed in the interview.

In response to the first question "Do you agree culture teaching is important in the EFL class?", all four teachers agreed that culture teaching plays an important role in the EFL class. The main reason they gave is that English is now a global language and more and more people are learning English. In these circumstances, culture teaching appears very important because teachers need to offer their students useful cultural information to help them to have successful communication with people from other parts of the world.

With regard to the second question "Do you often introduce cultural information to your students in your EFL classroom?", the four teachers answered "not often". Three teachers thought that they had no time for the frequent introduction of cultural information, as they needed to follow the syllabus and devote most of the class time to teaching English linguistic knowledge. One thought that it was not necessary to talk often about culture in class because the students would acquire cultural knowledge naturally as they advanced in linguistic competence, although this did not mean that he was against the idea of developing the students' intercultural awareness.

When asked "Which do you think is more important, culture teaching or linguistic

knowledge teaching, in the EFL class?”, the teachers all agreed that the latter is more important. For them, the mastery of linguistic knowledge, e.g., notably vocabulary and grammar, is the basis of language acquisition, and intercultural awareness is probably just a complementary skill. They believed that if the students acquire linguistic knowledge, their English proficiency could be developed more effectively.

When discussing the aspects of culture which interest and benefit the students most, the teachers mentioned values, beliefs, customs, history, literature, festivals, clothes, eating habits, etc. They said that the students are particularly interested in people’s daily life in different cultures.

When talking about the current textbooks, none of the teachers were satisfied with the cultural information in them. They mentioned, in particular, that there are no exercises designed to practice cultural knowledge. Additionally, in spite of a variety of textbooks, most of these focus on British and American cultures and are characterized by a dearth of cultural information pertaining to other countries.

From the interview, the author found that teachers have a positive attitude towards culture teaching. They think it is an important component of the EFL class, although they still put the teaching of linguistic knowledge first. Due to the constraints imposed by the syllabus and textbooks, they cannot give adequate time to culture teaching.

Findings of the Study

The present study is of great practical value in that it has significant implications for foreign language teaching and learning in China. Based on the results of the socio-cultural

test, the responses to the questionnaire, the notes from the teachers' interview, we can draw the following conclusions.

(1) A large majority of the students are dissatisfied with their intercultural communicative competence. This can be considered a direct consequence of their lack of cultural knowledge, which can be inferred from the distribution of the students' scores in the three ranges from the socio-cultural test.

(2) The students are very interested in English cultures. With the progress of their language learning, they become increasingly aware of the importance of communicating freely with native speakers.

(3) Most English teachers generally have positive attitudes towards promoting students' intercultural awareness. However, in their actual teaching, it seems that they do not make much effort to raise students' intercultural awareness. Most of the class time is taken up with grammar and vocabulary teaching. It appears that most teachers are more concerned about the teaching of linguistic knowledge at the expense of developing their students' intercultural communicative competence.

In short, there exists a marked discrepancy between theoretical research and the actual practice of culture teaching in foreign language education. The Chinese students are supposed to have better linguistic competence than intercultural communicative competence, as the former has been much more emphasized than the latter in English teaching in China. However, it is undeniable that a high degree of linguistic knowledge does not ensure effective communication with native speakers. Cultural differences between Chinese and English language use presuppose linguistic differences and it is important to teach students to

communicate in the way English native speakers do. To be bilingual, one must be bicultural, so due attention should be given to the importance of culture teaching in foreign language education. The urgent task for EFL teachers is to ensure that students obtain relevant cultural knowledge while acquiring linguistic competence so that they are capable of using the language appropriately in real life settings.

Teaching Culture while Teaching Language in College English

The main concerns of College English teaching are to help students pass exams, which emphasize linguistic competence and ignore the cultural competence of students. In the light of this and the fact that culture is a very complex issue, it must be expected that teaching culture in Chinese College English teaching will be difficult. In an effort to attain this goal, we will focus on three major issues: the goals of culture teaching; the aspects of English culture that should be taught, and the ways in which culture should be taught.

Goals of Culture Teaching

Foreign language teachers need to be clear about the core goals of teaching language in reference to culture. Lado (1964) defined the goal of learning a foreign language as “the ability to use it, understanding its meanings and connotations in terms of the target language and culture, and the ability to understand the speech and writing of natives of the target culture in terms of their meanings as well as their great ideas and achievements” (p.25). This goal has pedagogic cultural implications that force us to examine different contexts in which the learning and use of the foreign language take place and the social and cultural forces are

at play (Jinglan, 2001).

Valette (1977) categorized the goals of culture teaching as follows: (1) developing a greater awareness of and a broader knowledge of the target culture; (2) acquiring a command of the rules of etiquette of the target culture; (3) being aware of the differences between the target culture and the students' culture; and (4) understanding the values of the target culture. Hammerly (1982) listed ten goals, most of which, as can be seen, mainly relate to knowledge of the target culture, an awareness of its characteristics, and a recognition of the differences between the target culture and the learner's own culture.

- (1) Knowledge of the cultural connotations of words and phrases
- (2) Knowledge of how to behave in everyday situations
- (3) The development of an interest in and understanding of the second culture
- (4) Understanding cross-cultural differences
- (5) Understanding intercultural institutions and their differences
- (6) Research-like projects
- (7) Developing an integrated view of the second culture
- (8) The ability to evaluate statements about the second culture
- (9) Developing empathy toward a second culture and its people
- (10) Academic research on other cultures.

Despite differences of emphasis and terminology, both Valette and Hammerly attached great importance to knowledge of the target culture and an awareness of differences between the target culture and the learner's home culture in culture teaching and learning. In short, the goals of culture teaching are to achieve awareness of intercultural differences and

eventually higher levels of cultural awareness for intercultural communication.

Content of Culture Teaching

There are two aspects of culture teaching, cultural knowledge and cultural understanding, and these are linked by cultural awareness. By combining this knowledge and understanding, the learner will succeed in behaving appropriately in the target cultural environment. As Qiang (2004) expressed it, cultural knowledge only conveys cultural information, while cultural understanding conveys both cultural information and cultural communication information. Thus, culture teaching must take cultural knowledge as a starting point, cultural awareness as a bridge, and cultural understanding as a final goal.

In the words of Kramsch (1993):

Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them. (p. 1)

She emphasized the importance of learners' language ability as well as an understanding of both the home culture and the target culture. In her view, those learners who set up 'a third perspective', will best understand their own culture and that of the target language. Earlier Handy (1976) also pointed out that the content of culture teaching should incorporate knowledge of both cultures.

When either cultural knowledge or cultural communication information is lacking,

learners of different cultural levels may misunderstand the symbolic meaning or social meaning of words and produce pragmatic errors (Ellis, 1982). In general, cultural information can be gained directly through “formal communicative approaches”, which are concerned with the product of communication; and cultural communication information is gained gradually through “informal communicative approaches” (p. 12), which are concerned with the processes of communication. Furthermore, EFL education requires learners to be aware of their degree of knowledge and understanding of the home culture and the target culture and of their intercultural communicative competence.

Pedagogic Cultural Implications

From the goals and contents of culture teaching, we derive the pedagogic cultural implications. We look first at the syllabus and the courses based on it with their different stages. We subsequently look at the textbook and the way the learner’s knowledge and understanding should be acquired and tested.

Syllabus

Until recently in China, the generally accepted teaching syllabus for English language education has focused on the cultivation of students’ linguistic competence. There is still little attention to cultural knowledge and, as it is not considered an integral part of language education, no specific objectives have been defined with regard to it (Zhenya, 2005).

Without a culture syllabus, teachers cannot teach culture systematically, so, as one does not yet exist, it needs to be designed and integrated into the existing language teaching syllabus.

The syllabus should list specific cultural items and related topics with appropriate language learning activities to make up a 'content of culture teaching'. Aizhen (2001) divided cultural factors in teaching into micro-aspect and macro-aspect kinds. The former deal with words, idioms, rituals and customs, and nonverbal behaviors, while the latter include values, pragmatic rules, thought patterns and national psychological features; the one gives an aid to solving the existing problems in real-world communication while the other offers rules and criteria to enable students to have a panoramic conception of cultural system.

Cultural instruction in culture teaching

The instruction in the teaching of English culture should include the following:

(1) The peoples' way of life. This covers their ways of thinking, their beliefs, values and religions.

(2) The social customs in the target country and cultural differences between the target culture and the home culture that may include: cultural distinctions and connotations; cultural differences in everyday conversation; idioms, proverbs and sayings; euphemisms; taboos; customs of naming and addressing; the etiquette of eating behavior, etc.;

(3) Nonverbal communication including body language such as kinesics (the use of facial expressions, body movements, etc.), oculusics (behavior of the eyes or the uses and variation of eye contact and gazing), haptics (the use of touch as a form of communication indicating degrees and patterns of intimacy), proxemics (the study of the use of space), and vocalics or paralinguistics (the study of nonverbal attributes, or vocal cues that directly accompany verbal language).

(4) People and society in general and cultural background knowledge concerning the target country such as historical knowledge which may include social, professional and economic differences, as well as those which reflect regional characteristics.

Stages of culture teaching

Hu Wenzhong (1994) suggested that culture teaching should adhere to certain stages. He considered it unacceptable that only senior students are introduced to the culture and that they are taught large quantities of cultural knowledge as soon as they begin their university studies of English. He went on to say that, generally speaking, as students' language proficiency advances, culture becomes increasingly important and the proportion of culture teaching should be enlarged. Drawing on the four levels of intercultural awareness put forward by Harvey (1979), the author suggests three stages of culture teaching.

Culture teaching at the first stage

This stage is the elementary stage of foreign language learning. At this stage, the learning of culture-loaded words is important as they can directly reflect the value orientation of a culture. For instance, "butter" and "salad" will make no sense to students until objects and pictures are shown, while words like "individualism" and "nuclear family" have cultural connotations. Novel and exotic cultural traits of this kind will awaken children's interest at the very start.

Culture teaching at the second stage

At this stage, emphasis should be put on social rituals and customs, with modes of

addressing, wishing, complimenting, and so on, also receiving considerable attention. Many language phenomena mirror characteristics of a particular culture. For example, in English-speaking countries, people often use expressions for greeting, like “Hello”, “Hi”, “How are you?”, “How are things going?”, whereas in China, such greetings as “Have you had your dinner?”, “Where are you going?”, “Where have you been?” are very common.

Culture teaching at the third stage

This is the advanced stage where particular stress should be placed on the deeper aspects of the culture. Students are taught the philosophy, literature, history, geography, etc., of the English-speaking countries, and asked to compare them with those of their own culture. In this way, they acquire an understanding of the basic differences between their own and the target culture.

Textbook

It becomes apparent from classroom observations that the content and direction of lessons, and in particular their cultural content, are strongly influenced by the textbook with which the teachers are issued (Byram, 1989). Judging from the traditional teaching format in the Chinese context, the textbooks used for EFL students do have some merit in cultivating students’ linguistic competence, but because they contain too little knowledge they fail to develop students’ intercultural competence. A successful textbook is an integration of language and culture, developing learners’ cultural sensitivity as well as their language skills, and should therefore contain more cultural elements than is the case at present. All aspects of

cultural knowledge mentioned earlier should be represented in the textbooks, not only those relating to the British and American cultures, but also to others like the Irish and Australian cultures, as well as those non-native English-speaking cultures and of course the Chinese native culture. In addition, it would be better to introduce separate units and lessons which focus on the explanation of cultural points, and that provide practice and team work for students. It is further recommended that authentic materials be used.

Testing

Testing, providing feedback for teaching and learning, should also be reformed so as to stimulate and improve culture teaching and learning. Although most foreign language teachers do not deny the importance of culture in their course curriculum, few teachers actively test whether students attain their cultural goals. The problem seems to be that many teachers are uncertain as to what their goals should be and how they should evaluate them.

Valette (1977), whose categories of culture teaching goals we cited earlier, suggested different methods with respect to the different goals. To test cultural awareness, she advocated the use of geographic lists, map identification, identification of origin of place name, matching, listing differences and true-false questions. Knowledge of the rules of etiquette may be tested either with written tests or through role-play activities, while for an understanding of cultural differences, multiple-choice and short answer formats in reading comprehension can be adopted. Open interpretation and multiple-choice questions are used to test the understanding of cultural values.

Conclusion

The close relationship between language and culture has been widely recognized and accepted in English language teaching. In English language teaching practice in China, problems relating to the content and method of culture teaching have not yet been resolved. In this paper we have argued that teaching culture must raise awareness of our own beliefs and values and be adapted to students' levels and ability in learning. Though we have drawn attention to some suggestions on culture education, there are no perfect or universal ways to teach culture because of the multitude of different teaching environments. However, regardless of the methods adopted, the following two principles should be borne in mind:

(1) Much attention should be paid to cultivating students' cultural awareness and creativity, which aims to link knowledge and ability through the learning process.

(2) The content and process of teaching culture should serve the purpose of language learning.

How to conduct culture teaching well in language classes still remains a problem for language teachers in China. Yet it must be said that they have the duty to build up a good learning environment for their students, fully enlarge students' scope of knowledge of the target language and help them to construct their own model of learning.

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Appendix A

Socio-cultural Test

Part One

Directions: There are 15 questions in this part. Each question has an italicized part, which designates non-verbal behavior. Read each question and decide whether the italicized part is appropriate or inappropriate. If it is appropriate, write an “A”, or if it is not, write an “I” on the answer sheet.

1. If you are invited to dinner by one of your English speaking friends, you may *bring the hostess some fruit as a present*.
2. If when you study at college in an English speaking country you feel ill and therefore cannot attend class, you'd better *go and see the doctor and ask him to write for you a release for sick leave*.
3. Mary came to Zhang Mei's birthday party and brought her a present wrapped in a nice box. Zhang Mei *unwrapped the box in Mary's presence and praised the present*.
4. If you study as a graduate student in the USA, you should always try to avoid telephoning your American classmates at some time later than 11 a.m. unless there is an emergency.
5. Dr. Smith, over 60, invited Li Bing to his birthday party. Li Bing *brought him a China god of longevity as a present*.
6. You *don't need to tip the girl* who shows you to your seat in a cinema or theatre in the U.K.
7. In the English-speaking countries you usually *first introduce a man to a woman not the other way round*.
8. When you give your hostess the flowers you have brought her, you should *remove the wrapping paper first*.
9. In England, you should remember that *drugs may not be available without a doctor's prescription*.

10. It is *more polite to type the letters of invitation or acknowledgement than to write them with a pen.*
11. If you are a male and introduced to an English-speaking lady, you *do not take the initiative in shaking hands unless she holds out her hand first.*
12. When you feel ill and want to go and see a doctor, it is a good idea to *make an appointment before you go.*
13. When you meet your American teacher and her five-year-old daughter going for a walk, you say hello to them, and *pet her daughter's head to show affection.*
14. Li Ming was invited to dinner by one of his English-speaking friends, and he *arrived half an hour ahead of time.*
15. When you leave the American friend's home after dinner, he *doesn't see you to the elevator, just to the door of his apartment.*

Part Two

Directions: There are 15 questions in this part. Each question has an italicized part, which is the product of verbal behavior. Read each question and decide whether the italicized part is appropriate or inappropriate. If it is appropriate, write an "A", or if it is not, write an "T" on the answer sheet.

1. Li Xiaolan works as a secretary in an American company. One day she worked very late. Her boss said to her, "Thanks a lot. That's a great help." Li replied, "*It is my pleasure.*"
2. On his way to the school cinema, Li Hong saw Professor Jones walking to the cinema, too. Li said, "*You're going to see the film, aren't you?*"
3. Betty is a foreign student in China. She met Feng Mei and said to her, "I was told that you won the 100-meter race in the all-city track meet this morning. Congratulations." Feng replied, "*Just lucky.*"
4. Mrs. Brown, in her late forties, came to the lecture, wearing a new dress. One of her students said to her, "*You look nice and younger wearing this dress.*"
5. Xu Cheng happened to meet Mr. Jones at the bank when Mr. Jones was drawing money. Xu said jokingly to him, "*You're really a millionaire.*"

6. Wang Lin called at one of his foreign friends' house. He was really impressed by the beautiful curtains made by his friends' wife. He said to her, "*Well, I didn't expect you could make such pretty curtains.*"
7. Dr Jones, your supervisor, telephoned to invite you to have dinner with his family. You replied, "*Thank you. All right. I'll try to come.*"
8. When you're eating with an English friend, you wish him, "*Good appetite!*"
9. When you want to compliment your young English friend's new coat, you can say, "*I like your new coat*".
10. The appropriate answer to the question "Who's that crossing the street?" is "*She's Mary*".
11. Mrs. Godwin was about the same age as Li Ming's grandmother, so intimately Li called her "*Grandma.*"
12. On the way home, a student addressed his cousin in English, "*Hello, cousin!*"
13. Wei Fang gave a birthday present to her English friend Betty. Betty said, "Thank you, it's beautiful." Wei Fang said, "*I'm glad you like it.*"
14. Li Fang bought a new skirt. Linda said to her, "Oh, your skirt is really nice." Li Fang replied, "*Well, it isn't very good. I bought it yesterday.*"
15. Jane gave a present to Wang Hai. She said, "Here is some little thing for you. I hope you'll like it." Wang Hai replied, "*That's very nice of you. Oh, that's just what I want. Thanks a lot.*"

Answer Keys:

Part One

(1) A, (2) A, (3) A, (4) A, (5) I, (6) I, (7) I, (8) A, (9) A, (10) A, (11) A, (12) A, (13) I, (14) I, (15) A

Part Two

(1) A, (2) I, (3) I, (4) I, (5) I, (6) I, (7) I, (8) I, (9) A, (10) A, (11) I, (12) I, (13) A, (14) I, (15) I

Appendix B
Questionnaire

Part One

Multiple-choice Questions

1. Do you think the teaching of culture is important?
A. Yes. B. No. C. I'm not sure.
2. Do your teachers give cultural knowledge in English classes?
A. Yes, often. B. Yes, sometimes. C. Seldom.
3. Which do your teachers focus on in their English teaching?
A. culture B. grammar C. vocabulary
4. Is there ____ cultural information in your English textbooks?
A. a great deal of B. some C. little
5. Which of the following expressions would you choose to describe your performance in communicating with English native speakers?
A. excellent. B. passable C. poor
6. What is the main obstacle to your communication with English native speakers according to your experience?
A. limited vocabulary B. poor command of grammar
C. insufficient understanding of English cultures
7. Are you ___ in learning about English cultures?
A. greatly interested B. interested C. not interested
8. You learn about English cultures to ____.
A. go abroad B. pass exams
C. enlarge worldviews and understand foreign cultures

Part Two

Open-ended Questions:

1. What do you think are important in culture teaching?
2. What ways do you like to learn about culture?

Appendix C

1. Do you agree culture teaching is important in the EFL class?
2. Do you often introduce cultural information to your students in your EFL classroom?
3. Which do you think is more important, culture teaching or linguistic knowledge teaching, such as grammar or vocabulary teaching, in the EFL class?
4. What aspects of culture interest and benefit the students most?
5. What do you think of the current textbooks in terms of cultural information?