



Research Paper

The Influencing Factors and Strategies for Chinese and Foreign Culture Teaching in Senior High School English Reading

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Abstract: *The English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition) proposed the concept of core competencies in English subjects and listed cultural awareness as one of the core competencies in English subjects. The formation and development of cultural awareness is mainly achieved through culture teaching, so culture teaching is very important in English teaching. According to previous studies, the vast majority of teachers are aware of the importance of culture teaching in English reading teaching, but the present situation of culture teaching is not satisfying in the classroom. In this regard, this paper analyzes the main factors that influence the implementation of culture teaching in senior high school English reading teaching. In response to the analysis, some strategies to promote its implementation have been suggested.*

Key Words: *English reading; culture teaching; influencing factors; strategies*

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I. Introduction

He Daokuan (1986) points out: "Language is a component of culture, an important carrier of culture, and one of the main expressions of culture. If culture is compared to an organic whole, language is an integral part of this organism." From his statement, it can be seen that language and culture are closely related. *The English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools (2003 Edition)* states that understanding the culture of English-speaking countries is conducive to the understanding and use of English, to deepening the understanding of their own culture, to cultivating cultural awareness, and to forming cross-communication skills. What's more, the overall goal of the English course at the high school level is to develop students' comprehensive language skills, which includes five main aspects: students' language skills, language knowledge, emotional attitudes, learning strategies and cultural awareness. Among them, cultural awareness is the guarantee of the proper use of language. The aspect of cultural awareness specifically includes four aspects: cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, intercultural communication awareness and intercultural communication ability. It can be seen that the cultivation of cultural awareness is an indispensable part in senior high school English teaching. *The English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition)* issued by the Ministry of Education lists cultural awareness as one of the four core competencies of the English subject. In addition, *The English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition)* lists cultural knowledge as one of the six elements of the content of general high school English courses, and explains in detail the cultural knowledge content requirements of English compulsory courses, optional compulsory courses and elective courses. Therefore, it can be seen that The Ministry of Education attaches great importance to culture teaching in English teaching.

Reading is a component of language skills and one of the effective ways to test students' language ability, and at the same time, reading comprehension questions also occupy a considerable score in the college

entrance examination. Some scholars hold the view that English reading itself is a process of improving students' international understanding and forming cross-cultural awareness and ability. That is to say, teaching relevant cultural knowledge in reading classes can help students understand the information in the reading materials and accurately grasp the topic of the whole text, thereby improving reading comprehension ability and their cultural awareness. Therefore, English reading is a vital part of English language teaching, and it is also an important channel for conduct culture teaching to improve students' cultural awareness.

With the deepening of the new curriculum reform, English teachers have recognized the necessity of implementing culture teaching, and have begun to consciously infiltrate culture teaching in English reading teaching to enhance students' cross-cultural communication skills and cultivate their cultural awareness. However, due to the influence of traditional teaching concepts and test-oriented education, the current situation of culture teaching in senior high schools English reading teaching is still not very ideal, and cultural knowledge is still an obstacle to students' reading comprehension. Based on the current situation of culture teaching in senior high school English reading teaching, the author will study the main factors affecting its implementation. Finally, the author hopes that this study can provide some suggestions for front-line English teachers to promote culture teaching, and also provide some targeted suggestions for high school students to learn cultural knowledge effectively in English reading classes.

II. The factors influencing culture teaching in senior high school English reading teaching

In view of the culture teaching situation, the author further analyzes the data of questionnaires, classroom observations and interview records, and then finds out the factors affecting the implementation effect of culture teaching in senior high school English reading teaching are mainly as follows.

2.1 Influencing factors on the part of teachers

For teachers, first of all, the teacher's attitude towards culture teaching affects its effectiveness. If the teachers' attitude towards cultural instruction is positive, they will consciously teach cultural knowledge in English reading class. According to the survey, it can be found that the vast majority of teachers agree on the importance of culture teaching, which is a prerequisite for culture teaching in English reading class. Secondly, the teacher's teaching concept also plays an important role in the conduct of culture teaching. Due to the influence of exam-oriented education, some teachers have backward teaching concepts, and they believe that improving students' English scores is the most important. Thirdly, teachers' cultural literacy can directly affect the effectiveness of culture teaching. During the survey, some teachers said that they had certain difficulties in teaching cultural knowledge due to their lack of cultural knowledge. Therefore, only by improving the cultural literacy of individuals can teachers carry out culture teaching more effectively. Fourthly, most of the students indicated that the choice of teaching materials is unitary. Based on the data from interviews and classroom observations, it can be seen that culture teaching materials are mainly from textbooks. In fact, each exam paper contains a lot of cultural elements, but teachers do not teach them by mining them. For example, in one of the monthly exam papers, there is a reading chapter about an introduction to Easter in the West, so teachers can make full use of this article and combine it with the teaching of Unit 2 of Compulsory 2 to learn Chinese and Western festival culture. What's more, when teachers choose teaching materials, they choose according to teaching needs but ignore students' interests and learning situation. This is not conducive to promoting culture teaching in English reading teaching. Fifthly, the impact of cultural teaching methods on the effectiveness of culture teaching is crucial. Based on the survey results, it can be concluded that the culture teaching methods are simple and monotonous in English reading teaching. Most English teachers often use lecture method to teach students cultural knowledge with the help of multimedia, which can enhance students' interest in learning cultural knowledge, but it is not conducive to cultivating students' learning initiative. Very few teachers use other methods such as cultural comparison or role-playing to carry out culture teaching. Therefore, teachers should improve their culture teaching methods and strategies according to the teaching needs and the characteristics of the students. Last but not least, in terms of classroom teaching time, the school's English teachers have to take some time out of class every week for weekly tests, listening practice, and grammar practice, so the normal class time is very tight. In order to grab class time, catch up with progress, and improve students' grades, some teachers even do not explain and introduce too much the cultural knowledge involved in the teaching materials.

2.2 Influencing factors on the part of students

In terms of students, firstly, most of students are interested in Chinese and foreign culture, which is the a prerequisite for learning cultural knowledge. Secondly, through analyzing the questionnaire, it can be found that students' lack of initiative in learning cultural knowledge can also influence the efficiency of culture

teaching. Thirdly, students' own cultural literacy plays an important role in conducting culture teaching. For example, students with higher cultural literacy can better cooperate with teachers and actively answer questions in the process of culture teaching, thereby improving the efficiency of culture teaching. Lastly, students' own English language foundation also affects the pace of cultural instruction.

2.3 Influencing factors on the part of schools

As for schools, although the school organizes regular training and activities for teachers, there are very few thematic training and activities for culture teaching. Without theoretical training and professional guidance in culture teaching, teachers can not use appropriate teaching methods and strategies for culture teaching. In addition, the school does not provide sufficient teaching resources and teaching materials for cultural instruction, so the selection of culture teaching materials is also a challenge for teachers in the school to carry out culture teaching. Lastly, based on the data of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that this school rarely organizes cultural-related activities for students, which is not conducive to students learning cultural knowledge through various channels.

III. The suggestions for promoting culture teaching in senior high school English reading teaching

3.1 Suggestions for teachers

Firstly, teachers should change their teaching concepts in a timely manner and improve their cultural literacy through various channels. Even though most teachers recognize the importance of culture teaching in English teaching, some teachers are influenced by traditional teaching concepts, and they always pay more attention to the teaching of language knowledge in actual teaching. *The New Curriculum Standard* stipulates that culture teaching should allow students to correctly understand foreign culture, absorb the essence of Chinese culture, strengthen cultural self-confidence, and consciously promote Chinese culture. The ultimate goal of culture teaching is to promote the formation and development of students' cultural awareness. According to the results of the interview, it can be found that some teachers do not have a deep understanding of cultural awareness, which leads to the current situation of cultural teaching is not ideal. *The New Curriculum Standard* provides a new direction and requirements for high school English teaching, and teachers should carefully study the content of it and carry out teaching practice according to the requirements. What's more, the cultural literacy of English teachers can directly affect the efficiency of culture teaching. For example, the teachers with high cultural literacy can dig out the cultural knowledge hidden in the textbooks, and can also expand relevant cultural knowledge for students in the classroom. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the accumulation of cultural knowledge in daily life. For instance, teachers can watch culturally related videos or books, which can not only improve their own cultural literacy, but also provide teaching materials for culture teaching.

Secondly, teachers need to attach importance to the combination of cultural knowledge and language knowledge so that the two can promote each other. As we all known, linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge are very closely related and inseparable. Improving the current situation of culture teaching does not mean to abandon and exclude language knowledge teaching. Therefore, in the process of culture teaching, teachers should pay more attention to excavating the cultural connotation of vocabulary, grammar and discourse. When teaching vocabulary, teachers are supposed to introduce the slang, folklore, proverb and other contents related to the vocabulary. It is not only beneficial for students to understand and memorize the words, but also helpful for them to understand the culture of the target language through vocabulary. Some scholars hold the view that grammar is a summary of language expressions. Most of students are not interested in learning grammar, and they think that the content of grammar is very boring. Therefore, when teaching some difficult English grammar rules, teachers ought to guide students to compare the differences between Chinese and English grammar rules. This can not only help students understand the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, but also enhance the interest and efficiency of grammar learning. In addition, the discourse knowledge in reading articles also contains a large number of cultural meanings. Teachers need to attach great importance to excavating the cultural knowledge contained in the discourse, which can help students cultivate cultural awareness while teaching the cultural knowledge.

Thirdly, teachers are supposed to increase the weight of cultural tests in the content of the test appropriately. Tests can provide important feedback on English teaching, leading to better teaching for teachers and better learning for students. After the reform of the new curriculum, the examination of the core literacy of high school students has been included in the college entrance examination. As one of the four core competencies of English subjects, cultural awareness is of great significance to the English proposition of the college entrance examination. Therefore, in the usual monthly, midterm and final exams, teachers should

increase the proportion of cultural tests in the content of the exam, and consciously test students' cultural awareness level through questions. For instance, the topic of *A Child of Two Cuisines* in Book 2 Unit 1 is about Chinese and Western food culture. After students study this text, teachers can choose English articles that introduce food culture similar to the text. This not only trains students' reading ability and tests their level of cultural knowledge, but also makes students pay more attention to culture teaching. In addition, teachers can ask students to write compositions based on the cultural content of the reading material in the textbook. For instance, after learning Book1 Unit 6 whose topic is living in harmony with nature, teachers can ask students to write a composition to introduce the examples of living in harmony with nature. By doing this, students can have a deeper understanding of the topics in this unit, and know the importance to protect nature.

Last but not least, culture teaching methods play an important role in promoting culture teaching. Therefore, teachers are supposed to adopt a variety of methods to teach students cultural knowledge based on the teaching needs and the features of students. In reading teaching, teachers can design various classroom tasks through direct explanation, scenario performance, interactive communication, cooperative inquiry and so on to teach students cultural knowledge. In addition, a lot of teaching tools that can be used to improve the efficiency of culture teaching, such as pictures, videos and objects. Before class, teachers can let students give speeches to introduce cultural knowledge related to the topic of the text, which can activate students' cultural schema and increase their enthusiasm for learning. In the pre-reading stage, teachers can let students watch videos and enjoy pictures, thereby arousing students' interest in learning and helping them have a deeper understanding of what they have learned. For instance, when learning *Longji Rice Terraces*, teachers can provide a video about the beauty of the Longji rice terraces. Through watching the video, students can appreciate the beauty of China and enhance cultural confidence. In while-reading stage, teachers can combine multimedia display method to explain the cultural knowledge involved in the text. Most importantly, teachers should use the cultural comparison method to help students understand the differences between different culture and thus cultivate their intercultural communication ability gradually. In the post-reading stage, teachers are supposed to design different activities for different discourses. For instance, when learning *After Twenty Years* in Book 1 Unit4, teachers can guide students to have a role play. Through this activity, students can have a deeper understanding of the connotation and meaning of friendship, and then establish a correct outlook on life and values. In conclusion, a variety of teaching methods can not only enliven the classroom atmosphere and stimulate students' interest in learning, but also help students understand the cultural knowledge they have learned.

3.2 Suggestions for students

On the one hand, students should establish the concept of culture learning and form a correct awareness of culture learning. According to the survey results, although students are interested in cultural knowledge, their initiative to learn cultural knowledge is not high. When encountering difficulties in cultural learning, students should take the initiative to seek help from teachers and classmates, or solve the problem by checking information online. In addition, students are supposed to actively participate in discussions and activities under the guidance of teachers, so as to deeply understand and experience the culture. On the other hand, students are bound to improve their cultural literacy through various ways. The results of the questionnaire show that students learn cultural knowledge mainly through teachers' explanations in the classroom, which is far from enough to improve their cultural literacy. Therefore, students should make full use of various resources to expand their cultural vision in their spare time. For instance, students can acquire cultural knowledge by watching documentaries and TV series, and reading books related to culture. What's more, students are expected to actively participate in various cultural activities organized by the school, such as English art festival, culture knowledge competition, English drama performance and other activities. Through participating in cultural activities, students can make full use of the cultural knowledge that they have learned, thereby enhancing their enthusiasm for culture learning and cultivating their intercultural communication skills.

3.3 Suggestions for schools

On the one hand, schools are bound to organize a variety of culturally related activities for students to create a cultural learning atmosphere. Compared with passive activities to accept cultural knowledge such as listening to teachers' explanations and watching videos, practical activities are easier to integrate cultural knowledge into language learning. Schools can create realistic situations by holding drama competitions, dubbing competitions, and other activities based on the theme of cultural content that appears in English textbooks. This can not only stimulate students' initiative to learn cultural knowledge, cultivate students' cultural awareness, but also relieve students' learning pressure.

On the other hand, schools should make efforts to strengthen teachers' training in order to enhance their cultural teaching ability. First of all, schools can hold lectures on *The New Curriculum Standard* to help teachers

interpret and understand the connotation of cultural awareness, and help them clarify the content, goals and methods of culture teaching. Secondly, schools can provide learning resources for teachers, so that teachers can read relevant literature or watch high-quality classes to learn the methods of culture teaching. Lastly, schools can strengthen cooperation and exchange among teachers by organizing activities such as group lesson preparation and open classes. Through communication, teachers can discover their own shortcomings and clarify the direction of future culture teaching, which can not only better carry out culture teaching, but also benefit the professional development of teachers.

IV. Conclusion

This paper discusses the main factors influencing the implementation of culture teaching in senior high school English reading class from three aspects: teachers, students and schools. Accordingly, some teaching suggestions for promoting culture teaching in senior high school English reading classes are as follows: Teachers should update their teaching concepts in a timely manner and learn the culture teaching requirements in *The English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools* (2017 Edition); Teachers ought to improve their cultural literacy; Teachers should choose teaching materials and teaching methods according to students' interest and teaching content; Teachers need to attach great importance to culture learning in the actual English classes. As for students, they need to use their spare time to accumulate cultural knowledge and improve cultural literacy through various channels. In addition, students need to seriously study English language knowledge, which is the basis for learning cultural knowledge. In terms of schools, they should organize thematic training and activities for culture teaching, which can improve teachers' teaching skills. What's more, schools need to provide sufficient teaching resources and teaching materials for culture teaching. In addition, schools are supposed to organize cultural-related activities for students.

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