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DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THROUGH CHINESE CULTURAL CLASS

РАЗВИТИЕ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ КИТАЙСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ

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This paper focuses on the course of Chinese culture for international students in China and addresses the significance of developing the students' intercultural awareness rather than improving the cognition of the target culture only. This research emphasizes that integrating the students' cognition of home culture in the second culture acquisition is of great significance. Besides, this article takes a class under the theme of "Chinese Tea" as an example to illustrate how to incorporate international students' home culture cognition into their Chinese culture learning to develop their intercultural awareness.

В этой статье основное внимание уделяется курсу китайской культуры для иностранных студентов, обучающихся в Китае; рассматривается значение формирования межкультурной компетентности иностранных студентов. В статье подчеркивается, что интеграция домашней культу-

ры студентов в культуру страны обучения имеет большое значение для формирования межкультурной компетентности. В качестве примера приводится занятие по теме «Китайский чай», показывается использование домашней культуры иностранных студентов для формирования межкультурной компетентности.

Keywords: intercultural awareness; culture cognition; second culture acquisition; international students in China; the course of Chinese culture for international students.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная компетентность; межкультурная коммуникация; иностранные студенты; Китай; китайская культура.

As a teacher who has taken the Chinese language and Chinese culture courses for international students for over four years, I have met many students with a high level of Chinese language ability and very good knowledge of Chinese culture. However, not all of them know how to communicate with Chinese people. In other words, they know how to speak proper Chinese, but it is hard for them to further interact with the local people or engage themselves in the local culture.

According to the announcement on the official website of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, the construction of Chinese language and culture courses for international students is not simply aiming at promoting the Chinese language and Chinese culture, but more on enhancing the mutual understanding and friendship between the people of China and the rest of the world, and expanding economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries [1]. This is to say that the Chinese culture course for international students has never been simply to introduce Chinese culture but to cultivate the awareness of intercultural communication.

This paper is concerned with helping international students develop their intercultural awareness through the course of Chinese culture. To accomplish this objective, culture teachers must first grasp the difference between cultural awareness and intercultural awareness. The former term emphasizes the understanding of the general characteristics and uniqueness of the target culture. The latter term underlines a tolerant and diverse perspective towards the difference between home culture and target culture. To develop a cultural identity, one needs to make clear the boundary between "I" and "other" in the cultural dimension; but to develop the intercultural identity, one needs to break the binary opposition between "I" and "other". It emphasizes the possibility of an identity between the two.

Second, the culture teachers must understand the role of culture properly. If a culture teacher wants to improve students' intercultural awareness, to define culture as knowledge only is not enough. Culture should not be simply

objectified as knowledge, skills, or an automatic outcome of language learning. In a current well-accepted point of view, culture is defined as a process which is “as a way of perceiving, interpreting, feeling ... as part of the process of living and being in the world, the part that is necessary for making meaning” [2, p. 432]. To learn a culture, the learners must participate in the culture process by themselves, rather than just study a series of cultural knowledge as a bystander.

Third, the culture teachers should give enough attention to students’ home culture. It is worth noting that in the process of a second culture acquisition, one can hardly be independent of his or her home culture cognition. Robinson proposes a “Color Purple” theory and describes the second culture acquisition as “the integration of home culture and target culture in a synthesis” [2, p. 435]. In the “Color Purple” theory, home culture has its blue lens, while target culture has its red lens. Robinson states “Neither person can escape his or her own cultural lens, but each can choose to overlap lenses (e.g., purple) in order to understand better the other’s perspectives and arrive at shared meaning” [2, p. 435]. When a student is on his or her way of learning a second culture, it is the student’s home culture that selects, extracts, decodes, and encodes the characteristics and phenomena of the target culture.

How to incorporate the students’ home culture into the Chinese culture learning and improve students’ intercultural awareness in this process? This study here will take a class under the theme “Chinese Tea” as an example to depict the detailed design of the teaching process.

In most Chinese culture textbooks for international students, culture is presented as a series of knowledge points [3, p. 9]. Under the theme of Chinese tea it is the same. Most textbooks would introduce this theme by illustrating the tea planting area, planting history, tea classification, tea etiquette, the relationship between tea and Chinese culture, the Chinese tea trade, and so on. Teachers may explain all these parts one by one as required by the textbooks, and if possible, may bring some tea and tea sets to show students the brewing skills of different Chinese tea. There is nothing wrong with this way of teaching. It offers clear and systematic knowledge about Chinese tea, and it is effective for developing students’ cognition about Chinese tea, but not enough for improving students’ intercultural awareness. Students learn all this knowledge just as a bystander.

To help stimulate students’ intercultural awareness on the tea topic, teachers can adopt Robinson’s “Color purple” theory as a guide and to incorporate their home tea culture with the study of Chinese tea culture. First, cross-cultural comparison between the two cultures could be applied. Before class, teachers can ask students to briefly sort out the tea culture in their countries from the aspects like planting area, history, classification, and so

on, as listed in the textbook. In class, teachers may invite the students to present their findings first, and then to introduce the Chinese tea in a comparing manner, with the purpose to help students gradually develop an intercultural awareness by observing the similarities and differences between home culture and target culture.

Second, it should be noted that the significance of cultural comparison is not only on finding the similarities and differences in cultural phenomena but also on further seeking out the rules and values behind cultural phenomena. It is these rules and values that effectively help enlighten students' intercultural awareness.

When students introduce their findings of the tea planting areas in their countries, teachers can invite them to give a further talk about the geographical and climatic conditions of these areas. Then, teachers can instruct them to observe whether there are similar geographical regions in China and whether these regions are also tea planting areas. In this process, students, on the one hand, integrate tea culture with geographical knowledge; on the other hand, they may use their cognition of home culture to decode the second culture characteristics.

In the part of introducing Chinese tea etiquette, apart from performing Chinese tea ceremony in class, teachers can also invite students to show their tea rite, for example, when they drink tea, what utensils they use to make tea, and how to make tea. The culture teachers may remind the students that even though the tea people like is different, and the brewing methods are different, the courtesy of treating guests and friends with nice tea is the same.

Besides, teachers could invite the students to bring the tea grown in their countries to the class. In the part of introducing the Chinese tea trade, teachers could also encourage the students to introduce their tea or tea products to everyone. This is to invite them to participate in the cross-culture exchange, as a participant, rather than a bystander.

The method of cross-cultural comparison can be applied to many cultural themes in the second culture teaching. However, when applying this method, teachers must pay extra attention to the students' cultural backgrounds and must respect their cultural customs and beliefs. At the same time, culture teachers should be aware not to boast of the target culture. International students all have their own countries that they love and are proud of, and each national culture is unique. It is proper for teachers to highlight the uniqueness of culture instead of emphasizing the superiority of any national culture. Because this will leave the international students the space for them to bring their home culture into the cross-cultural comparison. This will allow them to bring their unique national culture into the classroom, and encourage them to participate in learning Chinese culture with intercultural awareness.

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ПУНКТУАЦИОННОЕ ОФОРМЛЕНИЕ СООБЩЕНИЙ В СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ СЕТИ ИНСТАГРАМ

PUNCTUATION IN MESSAGES IN SOCIAL NETWORK INSTAGRAM

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В статье рассматривается использование знаков препинания при общении в Интернете на примере социальной сети Инстаграм. Автор сопоставляет сообщения пользователей данной платформы на русском и английском языках в плане частотности употребления в них знаков препинания, а также соответствия пунктуационной норме. Выявлены основные сходства и различия в пунктуировании онлайн-сообщений в двух языках. Сделан вывод о существовании пунктуационно-просодической корреляции при употреблении знаков препинания пользователями социальной сети.

The article studies the way punctuation marks are used in the Internet communication, namely in the social network Instagram. The author conducts the comparative analysis of the messages produced by the Instagram users in two languages – Russian and English focusing on the frequency of punctuation usage as well as their adherence to punctuation rules. The basic differences and similarities between punctuation in two languages are revealed. The author concludes that there is correlation between prosody and punctuation which the Instagram users are guided by while punctuating their messages.

Ключевые слова: пунктуационный знак; Интернет-коммуникация; Инстаграм-сообщение; пунктуационная норма; просодическая структура; пауза.