

РАЗВИВАЮЩАЯ ЯЗЫКОВАЯ ПОДГОТОВКА КАК ЭФФЕКТИВНОЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЕ КРОСС-КУЛЬТУРНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ: СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОД В ОБУЧЕНИИ КИТАЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ

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Осмысление взаимосвязи между изучением языка и развитием кросс-культурной компетентности основывается на анализе широкого спектра влияний языка и культуры, что приводит к пониманию решающей роли культурологического материала для языкового образования. Предлагается обзор требований национальной политики к развитию кросс-культурной компетентности иностранных студентов в университетах Китая. Эта система требований определяет цели и содержание соответствующих языковых курсов: обучение китайскому языку не ограничивается развитием языковых умений и навыков, но обязательно включает компоненты, связанные с формированием кросс-культурной компетентности обучающихся. Особое внимание уделяется практике использования китайскими педагогами сведений о культуре для достижения комплексных целей кросс-культурного образования в процессе обучения языку.

Ключевые слова: кросс-культурное образование; современный университет; иностранные студенты; обучение китайскому языку.

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DEVELOPING LANGUAGE TRAINING AS AN EFFECTIVE CHANNEL OF CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION: A CONTEMPORARY METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH IN CHINESE TRAINING FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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By recounting the connection between language and culture, this paper examines the relationship between language learning and cross-cultural competence development, and highlights the critical role of culture input in language teaching. Then the article introduces the national policy requirements for the cultivation of cross-cultural competence of international students in the universities in China. This requirement directly affects the curriculum objectives of Chinese courses for international students in China's modern universities. It requires that Chinese language education should not be limited to the cultivation of language skills, but also need to introduce relevant cultural elements, to cultivate the students' cross-cultural competence. Then the article expounds on how Chinese teachers combine different Chinese cultural elements into different language courses to implement cross-cultural education.

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Introduction

As a crucial component of the world globalisation, education internationalisation has received widespread attention in various countries. It greatly influences the construction of educational resources, especially modern universities. Correspondingly, the training of students has long exceeded the requirements for their discipline-specific skills, and the development of cross-cultural competence has gradually become one of the essential goals of university training. As one of the countries that promotes the policy of education internationalisation, China also has the same requirements for student training, which guides not only the cultivation of local Chinese students, but also the training of international students in China.

As a symbol of culture, language is often referred as a channel for learners to understand the culture it carries. Accordingly, foreign language learning is usually regarded as an important means to help students understand

the target culture and to cultivate students' cross-cultural competence. This article will specifically investigate how to develop Chinese language training as an effective channel of cross-cultural education for international students in China. With this objective, this study aims to find the answers to the following questions:

- is cross-cultural communication competence an automatic outcome of language acquisition? is it appropriate to input culture in a language class?
- does the Chinese government have clear requirements for the cultivation of international students' cross-cultural competence? if so, what impact does these requirements have on Chinese language education?
- in general, what cultural elements should be introduced into language teaching in a Chinese class? which methods can be applied in the culture input? how should the focuses of cultural input vary in different Chinese language courses?

Language acquisition and the development of cross-cultural communication competence

Each culture presents its unique «ways of thinking and ways of behaving» [1, p. 38]. Language is one of the magic keys to interpret the culture code and unveil the internal thought of the cultural community. By studying a language, we can, as stressed by Sapir, be equipped with the tool for defining, expressing and transmitting the culture [2, p. 26]. We use language to present our «concepts, ideas and feelings» [3, p. 1]. Therefore, by acquiring a language, we are equipped with an effective tool to sense the feeling, mind and thought of the nation who speaks the language, as Humboldt claimed: «Language is the formative organ of thought» [4, p. 54].

Language plays a vital role in expressing culture and thought and, in turn, is influenced by culture and thought. In Hall's words, «two people belong to the same culture... interpret the world in the same ways» [3, p. 2]. Culture and ways of thinking influence the construction of the vocabulary, phrases, and the structure of sentences, and affect what to say and how to say. The plentiful expression for snow in Eskimo is a good example. Similarly, the different ways to categorise colour in different nations also vividly depict how culture affects language. As examined by R. Wardhaugh, distinct ways to categorise colour is determined by «the level of cultural and technical complexity of the societies» [5, p. 235–237].

The close connection between language and culture has been demonstrated and verified by numerous scho-

lars from various disciplinary fields. Language carries culture, and acquiring a language allows learners to know and to understand the target language culture. However, it is worth noting that language is not «the magic carpet», and successful intercultural interaction is not an automatic outcome of the language education [6, p. 135–146].

In other words, learning a language only provides an opportunity to understand the target language culture. It does not directly or naturally bring about an understanding of the target language culture, nor does it necessarily inspire learners to identify with the target language culture. With great possibility, insufficient knowledge of the target culture may lead to the failure of cross-cultural communication. Chinese scholar Bi Jiwan once pointed out that cross-cultural competence is a comprehensive ability composed of language skills, non-verbal communication ability, cross-cultural awareness cross-cultural adaptability and so on [7, p. 14]. In his study, Bi Jiwan states that, regarding the improper utterance in a conversation, the native speakers are usually quite tolerant if the language learners cannot speak the target language very well, as the mistake could be ascribed to the inadequate language training. However, if the learners use the target language with high proficiency, but violate the communication traditions of the target culture, in that case, it is not easy for the native speakers to forgive.

Successful cross-cultural communication never only depends on the level of language proficiency, but also on the learner's insight of the target culture. Therefore, mastering a language does not necessarily give efficient cross-cultural interaction. The cognition and understanding of the target culture also play a crucial role.

Since the last century, an increasing significance has been given to culture in the field of language education. It has almost become a consensus that language cannot be taught as a culture-free skill. This idea is embodied in related linguistic studies and pedagogical research.

In linguistic studies, language has long been regarded as an existence beyond the symbol system. More than an external expression of its culture, a language is also part of its culture, and constantly interacts with the culture. Since the 1980s, linguists from various coun-

tries have incorporated language's cultural and social attributes into their language studies and have made encouraging progress. Cultural linguistics, cross-cultural communication studies and linguistic culturology are all very successful attempts.

Correspondingly, in the field of pedagogical research, the view of integrating culture into language teaching is also widely accepted. C. Kramsch once argued that, culture can be «the very core of language teaching», as language can be seen as «social practice» [8, p. 8]. L. Damen re-defined the role of culture in language acquisition, making culture the fifth dimension in language teaching alongside listening, speaking, reading and writing. From the perspective of developing cross-cultural competence, M. Byram stressed that the systematic language teaching can provide a «structured presentation» of cultural knowledge [9, p. 65].

The requirements for developing the cross-cultural competence of international students in contemporary universities in China

In China, there is an explicit provision in the national education policy regarding developing international students' cross-cultural competence. The «Quality standards of higher education institutions for international students (trial)» issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in 2018 divides the educational training objectives for international students into four directions¹. These four directions involve four competency requirements for these students. They are professional disciplinary knowledge, comprehensive knowledge of China, Chinese language proficiency and cross-cultural competence.

Colleges and universities presently undertake most of the educational programs for international students in China. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education of China in 2018 a total of 492 185 international students from 196 countries and regions studied in 1004 colleges and universities in 31 provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities) across China². Therefore, the universities are the principal place to implement the national policy on cultivating international

students, which requires the universities to reform the educational concept and develop the relevant courses.

Although international students of different majors take different disciplinary courses in Chinese universities, they have the same compulsory course, which is the Chinese language. Developing students' cross-cultural competence is one of the basic requirements for constructing this course. There is an announcement, issued by the Ministry of Education of China, on developing Chinese language programs for international students. According to the announcement, the construction of Chinese language courses for international students does not simply aim at promoting Chinese language skills, but more on increasing educational and cultural exchanges and strengthening understanding between the people of China and the rest of the world³. In the context of education internationalisation, the construction of modern universities cannot be separated from the cultivation of international students, and language education could act as one of the important means to develop the students' cross-cultural competence.

Developing Chinese training as an effective channel of cross-cultural education for international students in China

The focuses and methods for incorporating Chinese culture into Chinese language classes. As mentioned above, language cannot be taught as a culture-free

skill. This principle is also applicable to Chinese language teaching for international students. In his work «An introduction to teaching Chinese as a foreign lan-

¹Notice of the Ministry of Education on printing and distributing the «Higher Education Quality Standards for International Students in China (trial)» // Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [Electronic resource]. URL: http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A20/moe_850/201810/t20181012_351302.html (date of access: 13.03.2022).

²Statistics of international students studying in China in 2018 // Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [Electronic resource]. URL: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201904/t20190412_377692.html (date of access: 13.03.2022).

³Letter on reply to Proposal No. 2624 (Education No. 091) of the 4th Session of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference // Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [Electronic resource]. URL: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xxgk/xxgk_jyta/yuhe/202111/t20211104_577702.html (date of access: 13.03.2022).

guage» Liu Xun pointed out that Chinese language training cannot be separated from Chinese culture learning and needs to take the culture as an important theoretical foundation [10, p. 118]. To help students develop cross-cultural awareness, a number of Chinese scholars and experts have proposed in their works what cultural elements should be incorporated in the language training and how to organise these cultural elements in class.

In language courses many cultural elements can be introduced directly or indirectly, such as geographical conditions, natural environment, history, festivals, customs, food and so on. However, it should be noted that language classes can not be equivalent to culture classes. These two courses have different teaching objectives, so their teaching focuses should be clearly distinguished. Zhang Zhanyi stresses that given the main teaching task of a language class is language training, the input of cultural knowledge cannot be too much. Otherwise, it may take up the time of language training and affect the accomplishment of the main teaching task [11, p. 64–65].

Besides, in language classes what kind of cultural knowledge deserves an extra attention, and should be the focus? The essential purpose of conducting Chinese language teaching for international students is to enable the students to successfully communicate across cultures, in other words, to avoid misunderstandings during communication. Therefore, in the process of language communication, cultural differences caused by differences in language structure, semantics and pragmatics should become the focus of cultural input.

Zhao Xianzhou once pointed out that many words that cannot be directly translated between different languages due to various social and cultural backgrounds. Words and phrases which can be translated may have different cultural connotations. Some may be positive in one language but derogatory in another. To clarify their cultural connotation in a language class is of great necessity [12, p. 82–83]. Chen Guanglei stressed that language class should adequately introduce the cultural mindset such as custom, way of thinking and cultural psychological peculiarities of a nation [13, p. 21]. For instance, there is a grammatical principle «from big to small» to express the time and location. To describe a date in Chinese, the year usually comes first, the month comes second, and the day comes last. Similar, the province comes first to depict an address then successively followed by the city, the street, the house number and etc. This grammar pattern reveals a typical cultural mind-set of Chinese people which should be introduced along with language teaching. In general, a language learner has limited knowledge of the target language culture in the early stage of learning the target language. At this time, if the symbolic meanings of the language itself are not enough to help students successfully complete cross-cultural communication, or cause their misunderstandings, then the cultural meanings behind these language symbols must be clarified.

There are many ways to incorporate cultural elements into language classes (for example, playing cultural documentaries, organising cultural activities, telling cultural stories and so on). However, teachers should also be aware of the different purposes of language teaching and culture teaching. Therefore, some cultural activities that are very time-consuming and have little relevance to language teaching should not be used as the main method of cultural input in language class.

Regarding how to incorporate Chinese culture into a language class, Chen Guanglei has summarised a series of methods as follows [13, p. 28–29]. One of the most effective methods is interpretation, which requires teachers to directly explain the cultural connotation of the target language based on the materials encountered by students. In addition, teachers can also use audio or video materials in the classroom to display different communication conditions for students, and guide them to practice under these conditions. Besides, the comparative method is also commonly used focusing on the comparison between students' home culture and target culture. The purpose is to help the learners to understand the different influences of different cultures on language. All of these effective methods are widely applied by most Chinese language teachers.

Chinese culture input in different Chinese language courses. Similar to other language training, Chinese language training is divided into four main sections: listening, speaking, reading and writing. For different training sections, the focus of culture input should not be the same.

Given the main task of language classes is to help learners successfully communicate in contemporary society, in most Chinese classrooms, cultural input mainly focuses on modern communicative culture. For instance, the modern communicative culture knowledge tells us how to greet, how to express gratitude, how to show the respect, and how to avoid to be offensive in a modern society. This knowledge undoubtedly can help the learners obtain a quick and comprehensive impression on how to communicate with Chinese.

In the training of listening, speaking, reading and writing, each of them involves a large amount of modern communication culture. However, listening and speaking training is more closely related to modern communication culture, as most listening and speaking activities are conducted in the context of communicative culture. A learner's listening and speaking abilities directly affect his or her communicative performance in modern society. Therefore, most international students attach great importance to listening and speaking training. Introducing the modern communicative culture can be and should be the focus of the listening and speaking training.

In contrast, reading and writing training is often underestimated by students. The main reasons are roughly in two aspects. On the one hand, reading and writing, in many cases, are not directly involved in communicative

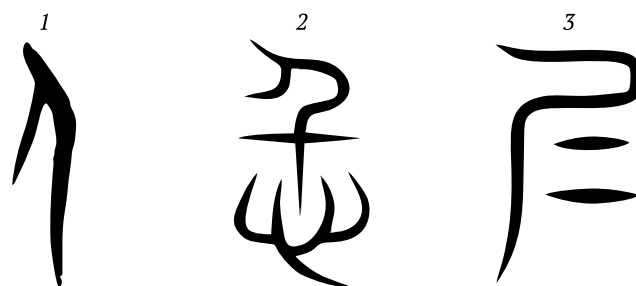
activities, and their impact on communication performance is not as visible as that of listening and speaking. On the other hand, the Chinese characters applied in reading and writing are difficult to learn. It is a massive challenge for international students to be proficient in Chinese characters, and many learners avoid using Chinese sending messages or emails to their Chinese acquaintances.

However, cross-cultural competence should not only be embodied by choosing the right words to greet, thank or say goodbye to the target language users. Instead, it should also involve an in-depth knowledge of the target culture. How could Chinese language training advance the deep insight into the culture? Reading and writing training, especially the Chinese character training involved inside, can well answer this question.

There are many cultural elements that can be introduced to Chinese reading and writing training. The materials used in listening and speaking training mainly focus on modern communication, while the materials selected in reading and writing training can cover all aspects of social life, and the background of the mate-

rials can span various eras. This knowledge expansion can help students extend and deepen their cognition of Chinese culture.

In addition, Chinese character training, which is inseparable from reading and writing training, is also an important channel to help students develop their Chinese cultural cognition. Why do we say that? As the fossils of Chinese culture, Chinese characters, since being generated, have been recording China's history, legends, philosophy and social changes over thousands of years, and their evolution itself carries the development of Chinese civilisation. Therefore, most experienced Chinese language teachers do not underestimate the pivotal role of Chinese characters in reading and writing training. Through the character teaching, teachers can effectively help students deepen their understanding of Chinese culture. There is not much research on this point. Therefore, two examples, from the perspectives of character glyph representation and evolution of character meaning, will be given below to illustrate the cultural value that can be explored and demonstrated in Chinese character teaching (see figure⁴).



Character figures

The character 人 and the concern on human subjectivity. The glyphs of Chinese characters carry rich cultural connotations. Here, this article will use the character 人 (pronounced «rén», literally person, human being) as an example to illustrate this issue. To vividly introduce this character, many textbooks have the oracle bone font of this character printed. As can be seen from this font, the character 人 originally is depicted as a person standing sideways (see figure, 1), and the two strokes respectively symbolise the arms and legs. In his work, the philologist Tang Han explains that the glyph representation of the character 人 reveals the Chinese ancestors' concern about human subjectivity [14, p. 17–19]. Furthermore, he illustrates that such a highly simplified graphic highlights no other parts, but only the human limbs. This is to lay great stress on the distinct capability of the human limbs, which is also the crucial feature that distinguishes humans from other species, since only humans can make full use of their limbs to make tools, work and create a splendid civilisation.

Today, in Chinese popular culture, especially on the Internet and mass media, Chinese people have created

more ways to interpret the glyph structure of the character 人. Some people decode the two strokes as two legs of a person, emphasising that one needs to stand firm and walk rightly as a person. Some emphasise that the two strokes stand for oneself and others, and the strokes lean against each other, which symbolises that, as a social being, one requires mutual support between people. It can be seen that the glyph representation of a character carries not only a linguistic meaning, but also a cultural connotation, which mirrors Chinese people's observation and understanding of society.

The character 仁 and development of the cultural values. The character meaning and its evolution also record important culture information and even significant history or culture changes. Here, this article will take the character 仁 (pronounced «rén», literally benevolence) as an example to demonstrate this issue. Today, the primary meaning of this character is embodied in its moral connotation, and it is commonly interpreted as benevolence, kindness or treating others with love and courtesy. However, when this character just came into being, its glyph was quite different (see figure, 3),

⁴All the character figures demonstrated here are quoted from Han Dian website, which offers details history of each Chinese character and explanations from various ancient and modern influential dictionaries.

and the moral connotation was not yet being fixed as its prominent meaning.

In figure, 2, the character is divided into two parts, with the lower part 心 (pronounced «xīn», literally heart) and the upper part 千 (pronounced «qiān», literally thousand). Some experts believe that the glyph 千 is transformed from 身 (pronounced «shēn», literally body), so the combination of 身 and 心 indicates a self-reflection; while some believe that glyph 千 is transformed from 人, so the combination of 人 and 心 represents a concern for others [15, p. 46–52]. In figure, 3, this character is composed of 尸 (pronounced «shī», literally corpse) and 二 (pronounced «èr», literally two), and it is interpreted as a sacrificial ceremony for ancestors [16, p. 97].

When did the interpretation with obvious moral connotation become the principle meaning? Hong Xiaoli closely studied the ancient texts where the character 仁 appears and clarified it is the works of Confucianism that enrich and develop the moral connotation of this character [17, p. 75–82]. In the philosophical system of Confucianism, 仁 is a key concept which can be interpreted as: the care and protection of the father to the son, or the son's filial piety to the father, or it can be

illustrated as the concern of the king for his ministers, or the loyalty of the ministers to the king. The emphasis on 仁 is to say that in social interactions people should adhere to ethical principles and well perform their social responsibilities.

Since the Han dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD), most dynasties in Chinese history have quoted the thoughts of Confucianism as their guideline in state management. Therefore, the moral value embodied in the character 仁 has received significant attention throughout history. This inclination, in turn, has further consolidated the moral connotation in this character. Gradually, the value carried by 仁 is further generalised into the concern and care between any two people. From another perspective, Chinese people's acceptance of this connotation also reveals a pursuit for a friendly, peaceful, harmonious social environment.

In a language class, it would be improper to explore a character's cultural connotation too much. However, a brief introduction about how the glyph and cultural connotation of this character have evolved can help the learners develop a dynamic perspective in learning Chinese language, and obtain a cognition about the development of cultural values of the Chinese people.

Conclusions

The cross-cultural communication competence is not an automatic outcome of language acquisition. To help students develop cross-cultural competence, language cannot be taught as a culture-free skill. It is necessary to incorporate the target culture into language training.

To help international students develop cross-cultural competence, the Chinese government has introduced a series of educational policies. Among them, there are clear requirements for the teaching objectives of Chinese courses. It is pointed out that Chinese training should not be limited to the language skills, and the improvement of cross-cultural communication competence is also an important teaching objective.

In order to develop Chinese language training as an effective channel of cross-cultural education at contemporary Chinese universities, it is of great necessity to incorporate cultural knowledge into language classes. However, it should be noted that culture learning in language classrooms should play a supporting role, not a leading role, as the main task of a language class is always language training. Therefore, not all kinds of culture elements should be introduced into language classes, and not all culture input methods are applicable to the language classroom. Culture input must meet the requirements of language training, with the main

goal of eliminating misunderstandings in communication.

In addition, to well support language training and the cross-cultural education, especially at a contemporary university, the cultural input in different language classes should vary with different focuses. For example, in Chinese listening and speaking classes, the modern communicative culture should be introduced to help the learners obtain the necessary modern communication principles and habits. Meantime, in Chinese reading and writing classes, the learning of Chinese characters and their cultural connotation should receive enough attention, to promote students' cross-cultural awareness on a profound level.

The different focuses in different language training share the same purpose of developing a cross-cultural education. However, it should be noted that developing cross-cultural education does not lead to the change on learners' cognitive, behavioural, and thinking patterns, making them the same as target language users. Instead, it is to help learners reduce the possibility of misunderstanding in communication. Moreover, in the face of the difference between the home culture and the culture of others, learners can adopt a dialectical perspective and a tolerant attitude to examine and explore different worldviews.

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