

On the Integration of Intangible Native Culture Heritage in Primary School English Teaching -A Case Study of One Primary School in Hangzhou

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Abstract

This paper is intended to analyze whether students will have a good command of target language points in the background of native intangible culture heritage and whether students will have a better understanding of native intangible culture heritage in English classes. The analysis bases itself on the data collected from two questionnaires and a test paper. The results and analysis indicate that students have acquired a fundamental idea of what native intangible culture heritage is and better appreciated West Lake parasols. According to the test results of students' ability of counting in English and spelling of different numbers, integrating native intangible culture heritage and English teaching is a useful and effective way to cultivate students' consciousness of protecting native intangible culture heritage and their competence in English.

Keywords: Native intangible culture heritage; Primary school English teaching; West Lake parasol; Number teaching

1.Introduction

Recently, some long-neglected parts of Chinese culture has become popular again after being integrated into foreign culture and then introduced back into China. It is imperative to value and excavate the essence of our culture, and to strengthen the preservation. Lou Yulie (2017) pointed out that people payed so much attention to the "going out" of the culture that they forgot, if they wanted the culture to go global, they must let the culture settle down first. Based on the practicality of the West Lake silk parasol and the scarce appearance of the local intangible cultural heritage in English teaching, this study chooses to combine West Lake silk parasol with English teaching in the classroom. Combining the intangible cultural heritage and the foreign language education is supposed to enhance students' awareness of heritage protection and stir up their interest in language learning itself. Wang Ning and Zhou Yitao (2019) also believed that the combination of traditional culture and foreign language teaching helped to cultivate students' self-confidence and cultural consciousness in their source culture. Most of the students began to learn English from primary schools, and the input of that information and knowledge mainly came from the teachers. If the teachers integrate Chinese traditional culture into English language teaching, students will better understand, inherit and preserve the traditional culture.

2. Second/Foreign Language Teaching in the Background of Native Culture

While learning second language, the people often emphasize the integration of the culture of the target language, but nowadays, many scholars start paying more attention to the "returning" of our own culture. In the case of Barfield and Uzarski (2009), examples of how to combine indigenous culture with language teaching are provided. Though the target language teaching is inseparable from the inference of the target culture, teachers can adapt and integrate local cultural materials into general teaching activities through story telling, body language, and so on. In 2017, Trang thi Thuy Nguyen (2017: 145) pointed out that the results of language learning under cultural background had three phases: "cultural knowledge, cultural awareness and cultural competence". At the same time, "language education should give learners the opportunity to develop cultural knowledge, competence and awareness of the target culture and source culture". Quan Wuxuan and Shen Xiaomin (2012) believed that the social science textbooks of Korean primary schools showed the inherent and superiority of Korean culture for containing contents related to their traditional culture. And in Japan, since 2008, the background of tradition and culture had been included in primary school social science textbooks (Tetsu Nakamura & Xu Fang, 2012).

In contrast, due to the absence of source culture in language teaching, culture teaching was only first brought up in the 1980s. How to carry out second language teaching and define the position and role of source culture in second language teaching? Chen Shu (1997) said that, due to the differences between Chinese culture and Western culture, the above issues needed further clarification. This also marks the starting point for scholars to acknowledge the importance of source culture in target language education in China.

Wei Yun (2004) said that downplaying the source culture and overemphasizing the importance of target language culture were the cause of "Chinese Cultural Aphasia". Zhao Fengling (2009) also pointed out that English teaching placed too much emphasis on the transplanting and imitating the teaching pattern of foreign cultures while neglecting our own. Xiao Aiping (2019) found that the occurrence of Chinese cultural elements in English textbooks was relatively rare. Jia Manli (2010) proposed that English teaching patterns should be improved when compiling teaching materials, Chinese elements should take up one third of the whole textbook. The exams should be designed to reflect the Chinese culture, and Chinese and English teachers should improve their teaching quality together. Liu Zhengguang and He Suxiu (2000) said that the positive influence of native culture in language teaching should not be ignored. Wang Ning & Zhou Yitao (2019) proposed that, in the relevant textbooks, when the teachers were teaching units related to health, they could mention examples such as Chinese tea, acupuncture, which could help make up for the lack of Chinese traditional culture in foreign language teaching. Li Kuiqin (2018) pointed out that the meaning of China tea culture was carried out under "the Belt and Road Initiatives" of English Teaching. Hou Yunxing (2019) also pointed out the lack of Chinese native cultural elements in the examination.

3. Research Design

The subjects of this study are 60 students of two classes of first grade in a primary school in Hangzhou. The research tools are questionnaire, test paper, teaching plan, individual interview with teachers and students, and slides made according to the teaching plan.

The introduction part of classroom teaching included playing cartoon number figure songs, letting the students sing and dancing along with them and using pictures to bring in West Lake silk parasol. The lesson were instructed by performing activities: *Tale a Look*, *Take a Count*, explaining the sentence pattern "How many...", looking at the pictures and counting the numbers of the West Lake silk parasol in them, introducing the parasol frame by playing to the chain game, letting them count the number of the frames in turn. Then

the students listened and drew a picture of the corresponding number of parasol frames according to the English numbers given by the teacher. Next, the teacher asked the students to put a certain number of figures on the platform, and the teacher and students counted them. After class, the students completed the exercise paper with the help of their parents, who should ask them to learn more about the West Lake silk parasol and the local intangible cultural heritage.

The students were required to finish a questionnaire and a test after class. The questions in the test were derived from what the teacher taught in class. The test was divided into two parts: counting, matching and drawing, and writing numbers. In order to help the students consolidate what they had learned in the last lesson, the first part of the test paper combined the knowledge points of the two lessons, which were about numbers and words with different colors. First, the students need to count the number of different patterns, and then matched the numbers and patterns. Second, according to the different colors of different patterns, students needed to match the corresponding colors in English with the patterns. Third, students had to fill in with the correct colors according to the color words. In this process, the students could not only review how to count in English, but also review the color words and match them accurately with the numbers. After completing these three steps, pictures and spelling could be used to review the words many times to memorize them better. The second part of the test required the students to write down the correct numbers. In order to help students understand the purpose of the test, some examples were given in the paper before starting.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Questionnaire results and analyses

4.1.1 Results and analysis of questionnaires before class

A total of 60 papers were sent out before class and retrieved. Statistics has shown that students seldom come in contact with intangible cultural heritage in the classroom. Only 8.33% of the students thought the teacher had mentioned it, and 41.67% of the students did not remember whether the teacher had brought it up or not. This signifies that most students are unfamiliar with intangible cultural heritage and know little about it. In addition, nearly half of the students said that teachers seldom or never integrated intangible cultural heritage into language teaching.

On the matter of the West Lake silk parasols, 95% of the students said they heard of or learned about them, but only 8.33% of the students were familiar with them. When the students had a basic understanding of intangible cultural heritage, it would be easier for them to understand what was being taught in class. When students were not familiar with certain details of the West Lake silk parasol, teachers applied it to language teaching. The results showed that 68.33% of the students were interested in the West Lake silk parasol, only 3.33% of the students were not interested at all, which showed that West Lake silk parasol was a suitable material for teaching practice.

To sum up, the students have a brief overview of the intangible cultural heritage, but that merely stays on the surface. What's more, because the teachers seldom mention native intangible cultural heritage, the students seldom come across the subject in a school.

4.1.2 Results and analysis of after-class questionnaire

According to the statistics, 29.41% of the students fully understood everything taught in the course, and nearly 53% of the students got most. Although 17.65% of the students only understood parts of it, it was still convincing that students could understand the knowledge in the background of intangible cultural heritage teaching. At the same time, in the after-class interview section, further questions were asked and

summarized.

About 85% of the students thought that their oral English ability had been improved after class. It could be observed in the classroom that group games had improved the team spirit among the students, who bravely stood up to express themselves and built up their confidence. However, 2.94% of the students did not agree with the statement. These students were mainly introverts and slow learners who did not fully understand the language points. Therefore, they were unwilling to speak up. With this in mind, the teachers should help them catch up with class progress and boost their confidence.

According to the results of the questionnaire after class, we can draw the following conclusions. Through teaching, students' awareness of protecting intangible cultural heritage has been raised and their learning skills have been improved, which stimulates their interest in English learning. Due to the absence of intangible cultural heritage in many subjects, the native culture elements in English textbooks of different grades are limited, hence rarely mentioned. The teachers should enrich their background knowledge of intangible cultural heritage for the sake of the students.

4.2 Test results and analysis

A total of 35 papers were sent out and collected back, thirty of them were answered correctly, mistakes appeared in only five of them in the second part of the test, and all the mistakes are made in spelling. According to the test results, a conclusion can be drawn that the students have a good grasp of the knowledge points.

In the second part of the test, the students are asked to write down the corresponding answer given by the number.

Table 1: Rates of Writing down the Correct Answers to Corresponding Numbers (multiple choice)

Option	three	6	five	10	nine	four	2	eight	seven
Accuracy	100%	100%	100%	60%	85.7%	100%	78.2%	80%	100%

The teachers reviewed the numbers learned in the class through repeating class activities. The students could distinguish numbers from 1 to 5 and spell them well. In this class, 85.7% of the students and 80% of the students could tell between 8 and 9. Though most of the students had mastered it, there were still five students who wrote the wrong numbers (they were interviewed after class). As for the number 10, 40% of the students wrote *tan* instead of *ten*. It could be concluded that when the students did not have a good command of the pronunciation of /e/, teachers needed to pay more attention to the pronunciation of words in the future study. Besides that, six students spelled *two* as *to*, *too* and *tw*.

In a word, most students have a good hold of the target language. There are still some who make mistakes in spelling, but at least most can tell numbers from one to ten correctly. In the meanwhile, the teachers should pay more attention to the pronunciation guidance, especially when teaching the /e/ and /u:/.

4.3 Interview results and analyses

4.3.1 Results and analysis of student interviews

4.3.1.1 Before-class interview

Two students in grade three were interviewed before class. One of them claimed that, apart from the Chinese teachers, the teachers of other subjects rarely brought up anything about intangible cultural heritage. In English class it never came up. The other one claimed that most students did not even know what intangible cultural heritage was, or whether the teacher had ever mentioned it in class.

4.3.1.2 After-class interview

Students said that it was very interesting to combine the intangible cultural heritage elements with English teaching, and they were eager to learn more about it. By watching animated short films, students

realized the importance of protecting intangible cultural heritage. Based on the questionnaire survey, some students who did not agree or did not know whether it was beneficial to combine the class with native intangible cultural heritage were interviewed. There existed some problems; some students could not keep up with the teacher. Therefore they missed the teaching content; and some found the color pens and paper and other teaching materials very distracting during the class. In addition, some students kept violating the classroom discipline and made noise during these activities, which led to more distraction.

Table 2: Students' Understanding of the Teacher's Teaching

Option	Fully	Basically	Partly	Not at all
Answers/Rates	29.41%	52.94%	17.65%	0%

The students who only understood parts of the course had given their reasons: their vocabulary was limited so they missed parts of the course content. The activities in the classroom were so interesting that it distracted the students' attention. The teachers taught too fast. In the second part of the test, though most students had mastered the knowledge point, five still wrote down wrong numbers. The interview found that these five students, when asked to count to 8 and 9 in the game of counting the West Lake silk parasol, they could not distinguish the two numbers.

4.3.2 Results and analysis of teacher interviews

4.3.2.1 Before-class interview

The first part of the interview was about the combination of intangible cultural heritage and teaching under the current situation. Four teachers from a primary school in Hangzhou participated in the interviews. Three of them were teachers who taught Chinese, Maths and English respectively to first graders, and one of them was the Dean.

First of all, the teachers of different subjects all had a basic understanding of intangible cultural heritage, especially the Hangzhou locals. Because there were lots of intangible cultural heritage elements in Chinese teaching materials, the local intangible cultural heritage was often mentioned in Chinese class. However, due to the limited mentioning of non-material culture in the textbook, it was far less mentioned by English teachers compared with the Chinese teachers. Beside that, due to the heaviness of the current teaching burden, teachers had no spare time to cover that area. Most importantly, the main teaching task of English and Maths class was not to study intangible cultural heritage.

When asked about their views on the integration of intangible cultural heritage, they held the opinion that it was beneficial to students' understanding of the local intangible cultural heritage and cultivating their awareness of preserving it. The Chinese teachers were optimistic that the combination of local cultural elements was conducive to students' learning, while others remained skeptical. The reason was that, on the one hand, teachers' teaching load was heavy and the teaching time was limited. On the other hand, first graders were too young and had limited understanding ability.

According to the dean, the school has arranged some activities, such as visiting Hu Qingyu Hall to understand the process of making traditional Chinese medicine. Some classes have arranged activities to learn about the local intangible cultural heritage, such as Hangzhou Xiaorehun. But these activities are not followed throughout the whole school. What's more, there is no specific curriculum to enrich students' knowledge of local intangible cultural heritage.

4.3.2.2 After-class interview

In order to evaluate the class performance more objectively, the English teachers invited the four teachers who were interviewed before to their class. In their imagination, they didn't think the integration would be so difficult. Intangible cultural elements could be introduced by changing the content of the

textbooks. For example, they could change the counting part of the class and ask the students to count the West Lake parasol frames instead. At the beginning of the class, the teacher could introduce the West Lake silk parasol and ask the students to explain it in the second half of the class by adapting the background of local intangible cultural heritage. In short, the the class has been proved effective.

4.4 Teaching revelation

First of all, the organic combination of culture and language is the key. In the context of different cultural backgrounds, various materials can be used for teaching. Secondly, interest is the foremost motivation in language leaning. There can be many kinds of games in class. In an ideal classroom, class activities involve different senses: listening, speaking, reading, feeling, and even smelling. Thirdly, the abundant choices of teaching materials enriches different English classes. Though the teacher only mentioned the West Lake silk parasol in class, English teaching can still be combined with other Chinese cultural elements such as intangible cultural heritage. Fourthly, teachers should pay attention to the underachievers and help these slow learners catch up with the whole class. For example, the teachers should maintain a proper speed of speaking, use the more suitable vocabulary, provide some extra help for the weak learners and so on. Lastly, the practical factors should be considered in the teaching design. The intangible cultural heritage selected by the teachers should be within the scope of students' acceptance. The selection of intangible cultural heritage should be carried out according to the theme of the classroom. The teachers should do some research to better understand students' learning ability and their interest in different types of activities.

5. Conclusion

It is found that most students' knowledge of intangible cultural heritage still remains on the surface, and they have little opportunity to get in touch with it in schools. This teaching practice has enriched students' knowledge of intangible cultural heritage, enhanced their awareness of preserving intangible cultural heritage, and developed their language ability, and stimulated their interest in English learning. In the actual teaching, the organic combination of language and culture is very important. Teaching methods should not be limited. The variety of material selection enriches the different types of English class. Teachers should also pay attention to the students with weaker learning ability and the allocation of teaching time. Of course, due to the limited sample and insufficient teaching time, there are still many deficiencies in this study, which needs to be further explored and solved.

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Biography

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