

Culture: A Journey Through Diversity in Language Learning

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Abstract: Culture has an important role in language teaching. Students from different backgrounds come from different cultural environments and have their own unique understanding of language learning. Language is not only a concrete expression of culture, but culture can also be expressed through language, and the two are mutually unified, so there is an inseparable link between culture and language. The purpose of this study is to discuss the influence of culture on language teaching and learning, analyze the significance of culture, and the role of culture, and then compare and contrast the performance of Chinese and Western students in language learning in many aspects, and analyze the influence of cultural differences on language learning from both sides, and give some suggestions and measures. In the results of the study, language learners can see that culture is beneficial to language learning, and emphasizing culture can effectively promote language learning. At the same time, cultural differences can also bring some challenges, including cultural conflicts and communication difficulties, etc. In order to mitigate the effects of these challenges, educators need to take steps to improve the situation. Overall, the benefits of culture for language learning outweigh the drawbacks, and by understanding and responding to the challenges, cultures are well-positioned to meet the needs of learners and facilitate intercultural communication.

Keywords: Culture; Language learning; Intercultural communication.

1. Introduction

Culture is a multilayered concept that goes beyond familiar traditions to include language, values, beliefs, and so on. Language, as a core component of culture, is an important means for people to communicate and express their emotions. Different cultures produce different languages, reflecting a particular cultural history. Language learning, as a complex process, involves not only memorizing vocabulary and grammar but also mastering communication skills, not to mention learning culture and adapting to new cultural environments. It is like a mirror through which people can get a deeper understanding of a particular culture. Understanding the relationship between culture and language is important for language learners, users and those involved in language education [1]. Therefore, it is important for language learners to use language to expand their knowledge and cultural horizons while acquiring language skills that can influence their motivation for language learning.

In today's world, there are thousands of cultures known to mankind, and the differences between cultures have contributed to the diversity of cultures, promoting the prosperity of the world's cultures and at the same time bringing corresponding challenges. Therefore, it is very important for language learners to understand the culture behind language skills while mastering them. Language learning is incomplete without the study of culture [2]. Language is the shadow of culture and at the same time culture is the foundation of language. Culture has a profound influence on individuals and society, shaping people's values, identity, behavior and so on. People from different cultures have different communication styles and language expression habits, which also directly or indirectly affect language learning." When a language is taught to reflect its educational value, the cultural content associated with it is particularly important" [3]. The importance of learning culture in both traditional and online classrooms cannot be overstated. With the advancement of time, it has become an irreversible trend to incorporate cultural education in the classroom where languages are taught. As English is experiencing continued growth as an international language, culturally relevant aspects are beginning to be added to language instruction for the most part [4].

The research in this paper will explore various aspects of how culture affects language learning by comparing how cultural differences between Chinese and foreign students affect their respective language learning and how each performs in the language classroom. Students will analyze the positive and negative impacts on their language learning, and make some suggestions and countermeasures on how to do it correctly in intercultural communication. By understanding the connection between culture and language learning, learners will have a better understanding of the role of culture in language teaching and learning, and will be able to cope with the opportunities and challenges of language learning in the age of globalization in the face of the wave of cultural diversity.

2. Background

Cultural context influences language, and language proficiency and culture are closely linked [5]. Each language reflects the values, history and traditions of its own culture. In language teaching, understanding the cultural backgrounds of different learners is more conducive to intercultural communication and helps learners come to respect different cultural perspectives. When discussing multiculturalism, what comes to mind most is that it promotes cultural richness and innovation. This is because multiculturalism consists of different cultures that are constantly absorbing and integrating to promote cultural cooperation. And the prospect of cultures, over time, causes the process of globalization and advances social change. To summarize, culture needs to be a bridge for language learning, so that learners from different cultures can better, find the right way to learn.

The study of culture makes language learning more meaningful. First, the study of culture increases learners' interest in language learning. Motivation for cultural learning creates momentum for language learning by combining abstract sounds with people and places [6]. Imagine a classroom where the professor explains the cultures of different regions and the students tend to show strong motivation. Learning about a new culture usually involves in-depth knowledge of its history, traditions, language, life and other aspects. This not only broadens the students' horizons and makes the class more interesting, but also puts the learners in a more positive frame of mind. Secondly, culture lessons play a key role in creating a change in cultural attitudes among language learners. In cross-cultural communication, learners learn to respect and understand different cultures' ways of communicating, avoid conflicts between cultures, and establish better and more harmonious cross-cultural relationships. Cultural programs allow language learners to see the commonalities between different cultures, allowing them to change their attitudes towards their original culture and become more willing to accept and learn from each other.

Based on the above discussion of the relationship between culture and language learning, the article will focus on a comparative analysis of the classroom performance of students from different countries and cultures in real classrooms to see how students learn language in cross-cultural communication.

3. Comparative Analysis of the Classroom Performances

3.1. Chinese Students

It has been found that Asian learners, especially Chinese students, tend to be consistently quiet and display negative attitudes, both in native-language learning situations and in second-foreign language learning. In one study, it was found that students were quiet in the classroom because of fear of failure, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence in their English proficiency, and not being able to fully adapt to the environment [7]. Flowerdew expressed similar views in her study, fear of not being able to understand concepts, embarrassment in front of their peers, habits developed in secondary school, and lack of self-confidence, among others [8]. All of these indicate that Chinese students do not perform well enough in the language-learning classroom. In contrast, foreign students were comfortable and confident. Chinese students are trying hard, but the way they choose to do it is passive. Students believe that the teacher is omniscient and dominates the classroom, asking questions,

teaching and so on, and that all students should do is obey [9]. The other argument emphasizes equality between teachers and students and encourages students to think independently to solve problems, which reflects the philosophy of Western countries.

In addition, Chinese students tend to prefer individual solitude in the language learning classroom, emphasizing individual achievement and self-expression, compared to foreign cultures where students are more adept at group cooperation and integration. This can also be linked to a lack of self-confidence, as the lack of self-confidence leads to silence, and the silence leads to the choice of solitude. As a result of these situations, passive learning occurs, leading to a significant limitation in the interaction between students, teachers, and classmates. Instead of speaking up in class, they tend to seek help from the teacher after class.

It appears from these studies that there is a huge variation in classroom performance between students. The reason for this phenomenon is rooted in cultural differences. Confucianism, which has been practiced for more than two thousand years, has influenced generations of Chinese people. People with Confucianism tend to be more humble, emphasize the importance of order, and respect authority [10]. In order to maintain order in the classroom, students need to be quiet at all times, and the traditional value of respecting the teacher inhibits their personal expression unless they have the teacher's permission. However, this does not mean that students are always silent; they are simply more comfortable with this silent mode of education. Although Chinese students are considered to be less motivated, they perform better academically than their Western counterparts, only in a different way [11]. The Chinese educational system focuses on students' academic achievement rather than self-centered students, and this educational environment focuses more on memorization and test scores, while neglecting the development of a certain level of self-confidence and expression.

3.2. Foreign Students

In contrast, foreign students are more willing to express themselves and show their individuality. They believe that there is no hierarchical difference between themselves and their teachers, and that they are also teachers and friends, which also reflects the concept of liberal culture in western countries. Teachers and students communicate on an equal footing and students are often encouraged to think creatively. Students tend to focus on solving problems and finding solutions rather than simply memorizing. In language learning, western education emphasizes cooperation, students are divided into groups to discuss and share with each other, and their warm personalities make them more confident to express their opinions. Differences between countries come from cultural differences, and cultural differences also lead to different student performance. Each culture has its own strengths and, of course, weaknesses.

4. Effects

4.1. Culture Plays an Important Role in Language Teaching

The impact of cultural diversity on language learning is twofold. On the one hand, culture plays an important role in language teaching. Integrating culture and language teaching brings far-reaching benefits to learners [12]. Students from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other in language learning, and studies have found that most students want to reorient themselves to the culture of their home country and increase their sense of cultural and national identity when learning English. At the same time, learners also realize the importance of international culture, and that it is not enough to stand still in the era of cultural integration and multicultural development [13]. Only by understanding the values, traditions and history of cultures will it help to break down cultural barriers and improve mutual understanding. Language and culture complement each other; language cannot be separated from culture, and cultural expressions cannot be separated from language. Culture has gradually become a necessary condition for language learning. To teach culture is to teach language. Language is not empty; language learners need to understand not only the context in which the language is used but also the target culture [14]. This also confirms that culture and language are

two inseparable parts. In addition, in the process of cultural exchange, different cultures interact with each other in language learning, leading to the intermingling of concepts and ideas, students absorb and learn from the excellent cultures of other countries, innovate invisibly, transcend the inherent cultural boundaries, and reach a balanced state, making language learning easier as well.

Therefore, the integration of culture in language teaching can bring a positive push to the learners.

4.2. Cultural Differences Having a Negative Effect on Language Learning

On the other hand, cultural differences have a negative effect on language learning. First of all, there are communication barriers. Different cultures may lead to communication barriers when language learners communicate with others. Different cultures have different manners and ways of expressing themselves, which can cause misunderstandings. Cultural differences can also lead to cultural conflicts. As learners are not aware of the values and social norms of other cultures, some conflicts may arise. At the same time, cultural differences may lead to social isolation between learners and native speakers, which is also a problem for many Chinese students, who may feel shy or uncomfortable, lose interest in learning the language, become inferior, and cause more frustration.

However, despite the negative effects that culture can have on language learning, there are positive steps that can be taken to improve the situation. Firstly, in language teaching, teachers need to encourage students to think differently. Emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness and encourage students to respectfully understand the differences between cultures. Encourage language learners to take the initiative to ask questions, study actively, find ways to solve problems, and develop independent learning. Second, encourage cross-cultural communication. For some students who are reluctant to express their opinions, create more opportunities for discussion in the classroom to allow learners to interact and organize some group cooperation projects to promote cross-cultural communication, connect language skills and understand each other's cultures. If students show low self-esteem and frustration in cultural communication, some mental health support can be provided. Identify learners' interests and needs, make learning plans for learners and give them more concern. Last but not least, it is important to incorporate cultural education, including cultural traditions, art, etc. Culture plays an active role in raising students' awareness, learning language skills, and changing attitudes towards society and native cultures, and is considered an important part of language learning and teaching [15]. Through studying culture, discussing it in class, watching movies with cultural themes, and reading books about it.

These solutions can help to mitigate the negative impact of cultural differences on language teaching and learning and, to some extent, promote better language use by learners and more successful language learning based on intercultural communication.

5. Conclusion

Although as of now there are no clear conclusions about the connection between culture and language learning, it is clear from some concrete examples that learning about culture is a necessary activity in language teaching. This paper begins to study the influence of culture on language teaching and learning, analyze the performance of students in language learning in different cultures, and backgrounds and analyze the influence role from both positive and negative sides. Overall, the study illustrates the impact of culture on language learning, which can be used as a good reference to take different measures for different students. In particular, Chinese students, as a large group, were analyzed in comparison with Western students based on their special cultural background and their classroom performance. The results of the study show that culture plays an important role in language skills, changing attitudes towards native cultures, and cultural awareness, and that incorporating culture into the classroom of language teaching is positive and adaptable. Even though it has a two-sided impact, there are still some measures that can be taken to counteract some of the negative effects. This requires educators to adopt certain strategies in language teaching. These include encouraging intercultural communication, encouraging students to think out of the box, respecting the diversity of

different cultures and so on, and organizing some cultural education activities to raise cultural awareness.

The influence of culture on language teaching is not only for language learning, the purpose of this study is to put the public in a diversified and globalized society, and by integrating culture into language teaching, students, or even everyone, can cultivate learners with cross-cultural awareness and global vision. Culture will play an important role in language teaching and learning for a long time to promote language learning and intercultural communication.

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