
Research on the Cultivation of Intercultural Teaching Ability of International Chinese Teachers

Sisu Xu Jianbo

School of Chinese Studies and Exchange, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China

Email address:

xujianbo@shisu.edu.cn

To cite this article:

Sisu Xu Jianbo. Research on the Cultivation of Intercultural Teaching Ability of International Chinese Teachers. *Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies*. Vol. 7, No. 4, 2022, pp. 150-154. doi: 10.11648/j.tecs.20220704.16

Received: December 4, 2022; **Accepted:** December 23, 2022; **Published:** December 28, 2022

Abstract: With the continuous improvement of China's comprehensive national strength, more and more foreign students study in Chinese and Chinese culture. Meanwhile, China spreads Chinese culture and makes the world feel more about Chinese culture. This undoubtedly requires the continuous development and expansion of the faculty of international Chinese language teachers. However, the international Chinese language teachers are still facing the current situation of small quantity and poor quality. The professional quality of international Chinese teachers needs to be improved urgently, especially the improvement of cross-cultural teaching ability is the top priority. The International Chinese Teacher Standard sets out clear requirements for teachers' intercultural communication ability, who need to understand the basic principles and strategies of intercultural communication; master the cross-cultural communication skills, can effectively solve the problems encountered in the cross-cultural communication; and can use the target language or English for communication and teaching. In the actual teaching process, international Chinese teachers should not only pay attention to the Chinese ontology knowledge such as Chinese pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, but also need to understand and solve the possible cross-cultural problems. We should focus on cultivating cross-cultural communication skills. The paper discusses the effective ways for international Chinese teachers to improve the cross-cultural teaching ability from three aspects: cultivating the belief and attitude of cross-cultural education, independent learning and understanding of different cultural knowledge so as to have a good cultural knowledge reserve, improving the classroom practice ability in the process of cross-cultural teaching, and establishing the correct cultural view.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Teaching, Beliefs and Attitude, Learning, Teaching Practice, Cultural View

1. Introduction

Since the 21st century, globalization and internationalization have become a worldwide wave. Different countries and nations have colorful and distinctive regional cultures, which greatly enrich the spiritual connotation of human life and create a colorful world, and communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. The study of cross-cultural communication has also emerged. Before studying intercultural communication, we should first make clear what is intercultural communication and what is intercultural communication ability. As for intercultural communication, Chinese American psychologist Ting Toomey believes that "intercultural communication is a process of symbolic communication between people from different cultural backgrounds". [1] Samovar & Porter

believes that "intercultural communication refers to the communication between people whose cultural concepts and symbol systems are different enough to change the communication events". [2] Among the many definitions, the domestic scholar Hu Wenzhong has the most concise definition, and he believes "that intercultural communication is the communication between people of different backgrounds". [3] From the above definitions, we can conclude the basic concept of cross-cultural communication, that is, cross-cultural communication is the face-to-face communication between people, which involves many differences, which are easy to cause contradictions and conflicts. Regarding the cross-cultural communication ability, Zu Xiaomei believes "that the intercultural communication ability is the comprehensive ability including knowledge, skills, attitude and cultural consciousness". [4] Fantini

believes “that the intercultural communication ability refers to the comprehensive ability needed for effective and proper communication with people of different cultures”. [5] Although the expression is different, but scholars for cross-cultural communication ability elements of basic understanding, is summarized across cultural communication ability as different cultural background of people communicate with each other, has a clear cross-cultural consciousness, to identify cultural differences, eliminate cultural interference, and communicate successfully and smoothly. There have been many discussions and studies on the theoretical definition, modeling attempts and training ways of cultivating students' cross-cultural communication ability. Especially in the foreign language teaching field. Jia Yuxin has clearly pointed out that "cross-cultural communication skills are the ultimate goal of foreign language education". [7] However, there is relatively little research on the cross-cultural teaching ability of international Chinese teachers. However, the teaching object of international Chinese teachers is the real Chinese learners from different cultural backgrounds, who must directly face the cross-cultural problems in the teaching process. It can be said that the cross-cultural teaching ability of international Chinese teachers will directly affect the teachers' teaching level and the students' learning effect. As the core element of teaching and training, teachers with cross-cultural teaching ability can better help students from different cultural backgrounds to improve their skills to survive in a multicultural world. Chinese teachers' own cultural cultivation will directly affect the professional decision and judgment of course design, and the accuracy and correctness of cultural understanding will directly reflect the quality of classroom practice. The explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge mastered in culture are important elements of curriculum design. Therefore, the improvement of Chinese teachers' cross-cultural teaching ability is bound to become the basic content of the future teacher education and training programs.

In 2007 and 2012, Hanban issued and revised the International Chinese Language Teacher Standards, providing a comprehensive description of the knowledge and skills that international Chinese language teachers should have, which also clearly pointed out that "Chinese culture and cross-cultural communication" is one of the five core abilities. It can be seen that the cross-cultural teaching ability of international Chinese teachers increasingly highlights the trend of core values.

2. Why Should We Attach Importance to the Cross-Cultural Teaching Ability

With the continuous upsurge of "Chinese Popular", Chinese is gradually rising to become a new international strong language. According to statistics, by the end of 2021, the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization, the United Nations food and agriculture organization, the world tourism organization and other 10 UN

special agencies to Chinese as the official language, more than 180 countries and regions to carry out the Chinese education, 76 countries will Chinese into the national education system, foreign are learning Chinese over 25 million, total learning and use of Chinese nearly 200 million. Up to now, 476 Confucius Institutes and 851 Confucius classrooms in primary and secondary schools have been opened in 127 countries and regions. At present, more than 200 universities in more than 70 countries are still actively applying for Confucius Institutes. Today's Chinese teaching has gradually become a global cause, and has attracted more and more attention by people all over the world. This is a true portrayal of the Chinese language to the world. For the recruitment of international students in China, the country will also further expand the enrollment scale and improve the quality of enrollment. The Outline of the National Plan for Medium-term Education Reform and Development from 2010 to 2020 clearly proposes the implementation of the preparatory education and study abroad plan in China, and that the number of students studying in China will be further expanded and the quality of education in China will be continuously improved. Both of the above situations provide policy, programmatic and demanding guidance for the development and expansion of international Chinese teachers. However, a common phenomenon of international Chinese teachers is the weak basic research, teachers' cross-cultural teaching concept is not in place or the lack of cultural teaching consciousness is absent, the cross-cultural teaching practice is shallow, the language and culture teaching is disconnected, the curriculum design is not scientific and so on. The professional quality of international Chinese teachers urgently needs to be improved, especially the improvement of cross-cultural teaching ability is the top priority.

3. How to Cultivate the Cross-cultural Teaching Ability

How to cultivate and enhance cross-cultural communication skills, Professor Byram points out that “the four major factors affecting cross-cultural communication skills including attitude, knowledge, skills and cultural criticism consciousness”. [6] From its classic cross-cultural communication ability cultivation model can be summarized as follows: First, cultivate cross-cultural attitude. Keep a curious and open mind, not eager to make positive judgments on their own culture and make negative judgments on other cultures; second, obtain cross-cultural knowledge. Understanding of a social group and its products, the behavior mode of domestic and communicative target countries, and the general process of social and personal communication; third, cultivate cross-cultural skills.— can interpret literature or events from another culture with relevant literature or events in their own culture; discovery and communication skills-to acquire new knowledge of a culture or cultural activity and make comprehensive use of attitudes, knowledge, and skills in practical communication; Fourth,

develop a sense of cultural criticism. Able to judge views, behaviors and products from their own culture and other cultures and countries by clear standards. Drawing on this, how to improve the cross-cultural teaching ability of international Chinese teachers can also be self-learning and training from the following aspects.

3.1. Cultivate the Beliefs and Attitude of Intercultural Education

In the early 1970s, influenced by the behaviorism theory, the language teaching research mainly focused on teachers' classroom behavior, and ignored the important role of teachers' cognition in the teaching process. With the rise of cognitive psychology, in the late 1970s, researchers began to pay attention to the dominant role of individual thoughts on individual behavior, and researchers began to pay more and more attention to the influence of teachers' cognition on teaching behavior. People realize that behind teachers' teaching behavior, they always take certain teaching ideas and beliefs as the guide, although some beliefs are often not realized by teachers, and may not be clearly expressed. Through research, it is found that teachers' cognitive activities (beliefs) even determine teachers' classroom teaching behavior to some extent. This will directly lead to the way teachers teach and how well students learn. Therefore, international Chinese teachers must cultivate their own intercultural consciousness and establish the belief of intercultural education. Li citing also pointed out in her review article on the intercultural teaching ability of international Chinese teachers that "teachers' beliefs and teaching practice should be the source of improving the international education level of Chinese language, and also an important topic in the field of teachers' professional growth research." [10]

Some scholars have pointed out that there are six activities that affect the change of teachers' beliefs: 1) activities with colleagues; 2) conflict between personal goals and the situation; 3) the educational concepts accepted in college are consistent with practice; 4) teachers innovate the curriculum; 5) support for successful classroom practice; 6) teachers participate in training or research projects. Zheng Xinmin et al. pointed out that "teachers should have the ability to self-reflect and interact with colleagues. At the same time, appropriate and effective teacher training helps teachers to expand and update teachers' beliefs". [13] Xie Yi et al. believe that "reflection is the most effective way to improve teachers' beliefs". [12] International Chinese teachers in the teaching practice often encounter such a situation, the same teacher, the same course, the same textbook, the same level of students, the same teaching method, but the teaching effect is very different. The main reason is that Chinese language learners from different countries have great differences in terms of cultural background, thinking mode and learning habits. Generally speaking, the factors affecting the learning effect all come from these cross-cultural factors. This requires the international Chinese teachers to constantly reflect on their own teaching behavior in the process of teaching practice, and establish the consciousness of

cross-cultural teaching, so as to transform it into a belief that the students with different cultural backgrounds should deal with the cross-cultural teaching barriers. Effectively improve the teaching effect. Wang Timiao's research points out that "teachers must have the ability to construct and produce knowledge through real-time reflection on teaching practice." [11]

3.2. Independent Learning and Understanding of Different Cultural Knowledge So as to Have a Good Cultural Knowledge Reserve

In addition to international Chinese teachers need to establish beliefs in cross-cultural teaching, they also need to constantly learn and understand different cultural knowledge independently, and have a good bank of cultural knowledge reserve. Cui Xiliang pointed out in his article that "international Chinese teachers need to study the politics, history, culture, religious beliefs, customs and habits of the target countries, so as to know the customs, the taboo and bans. As we known, Only by knowing yourself and your enemy can you win a hundred battles. This is a very simple truth". [9] The Office of the National Leading Group for the International Promotion of Chinese Language (hereinafter referred to as "Hanban") has developed and compiled the International Standards for Chinese Language Teachers (hereinafter referred to as the Standards) for the professional quality and teaching level that international Chinese language teachers should have. The Standard points out that "international Chinese teachers must have a certain level of cultural knowledge, and gives a reference to the concept of "cultural knowledge that international Chinese teachers should have", mainly including three categories: basic knowledge of Chinese culture, basic knowledge of China's national conditions and basic knowledge of the world's main culture". [14] At the same time, Hanban has also launched the corresponding cultural knowledge inspection standards. International Chinese teachers are all taught by Chinese learners from different cultural backgrounds, and the language and culture themselves are inseparable, and the two are combined. Language is the carrier of culture, and culture is the connotation of language. In the process of learning Chinese, foreigners are learning Chinese culture from beginning to end. The process of Chinese learning is the process of constantly experiencing and understanding Chinese culture. The cultural connotation behind the language is also the knowledge that is the most attractive and the most interesting to learners. When teaching Chinese, international Chinese teachers should not only teach professional language knowledge, but also explain the cultural knowledge contained in the language clearly, so that Chinese learners can really understand and even integrate it. This requires international Chinese teachers to have a high level of understanding, interpretation and dissemination of their own cultural knowledge. On the other hand, international Chinese language teachers are teaching international students from different cultural backgrounds. They are inevitably influenced by their own cultural knowledge when learning Chinese language and Chinese culture, and this influence is

often a negative migration to some extent. In order to better help international students to understand and improve the learning effect, it is necessary for international Chinese language teachers to understand the cultural background and knowledge of these international students, so as to make better and effective explanations. Halliday who has been teaching Chinese for many years, once pointed out: "The vast majority of Chinese teachers are still based in Chinese as their own language. Have they been trained to view Chinese from the eyes of foreigners? In other words, do they use external positions to examine Chinese language phenomena? The problem is that they may bring about many myths of the Chinese language and Chinese culture, but these often make it more difficult for learners of the 'West' (including North and South America, Africa, Australia, Europe, South Asia and Southwest Asia) to learn". [15] It can be seen that international Chinese language teachers should avoid being blindly immersed in the awe and love of their own language and culture, while ignoring foreign learners' understanding, feeling, and acceptance of Chinese language and Chinese culture.

3.3. Improve the Classroom Practice Ability in the Cross-Cultural Teaching Process and Establish a Correct Cultural View

In the process of teaching practice, international Chinese teachers need to constantly improve their language expression ability, and explain their language and cultural knowledge with concise and accurate language, which is also the basic quality that a qualified teacher should have. Zhao Jinming once pointed out that "the appropriate discourse system is the guarantee of intercultural communication". [8] In addition, like all other classrooms, international Chinese teachers should also have certain classroom management ability. It should be pointed out here that international Chinese teachers should have the ability to correctly deal with "cultural conflicts" in the teaching process. For example, while teaching the Chinese greeting, "Have you eaten it?" The phenomenon of "cultural conflict" caused by the greeting. When international students first started learning Chinese, they faced the greeting "Did you eat?" Always full of doubts. Why did people ask in the morning, "Did you eat it?"; While at noon, people also asked, "Did you eat it?"; when in the evening, people still asked, "Have you eaten?" "Why do people always care about whether I have dinner? Is this asking about other people's privacy?" and so on. When faced with this kind of "cultural conflict" phenomenon, we must first face the question positively. In the face of cross-cultural conflicts, some teachers may take an attitude of avoidance or say "it was just a conventional phenomenon" to prevaricate, but such answers are difficult to convince students. Then, give a reasonable explanation. Using the sentence "have you eaten it?" as a greeting, it is not a strange language phenomenon, it is just a feature of a language. Just as English language often revolves around "weather" as the opening line. As for why the use of "have you eaten it?" as a greeting. It is because in Chinese culture, "eating" is regarded as the most basic demand of

people. It is said that the food and sex are the natural instincts of people. There is a folk adage called "Min yi shi wei tian" in Chinese, which means Food is the first necessity of the people or Food is god for the people or Food is No. 1 need. In Chinese, there are many descriptions related to work or life that are related to eating. For example, the population are called "ren kou" in Chinese, which literally means everyone's mouth. Making a living is called "Hu kou", means finding something to eat to make a living. People who do technology can be called "eating craft food" and so on. It is because the Chinese word "eat" has many meanings, you can largely avoid embarrassment and largely protect your privacy by using the phrase "have you eaten it?" As a greeting. It's also easy to answer these questions. You just need to answer "Yes" or "Not". It's enough. In fact, people don't ask you for anything about what you eat. This is consistent with Western privacy. This not only eliminates the students' misunderstanding, but also helps the students to deepen their understanding. International Chinese language teachers will often encounter such as this, more or even more cross-cultural "conflicts" in the process of teaching practice. We can only constantly summarize in the continuous practice, and strive to find a more reasonable, more effective solutions, so as to improve our own cross-cultural teaching ability.

International Chinese language teachers should also establish a correct cultural view. First of all, we should respect world cultural diversity, cross-cultural empathy and critical cultural awareness. For geographical and historical reasons, the cultures of the different countries and regions of the world show a rich diversity. In 2001, the UNESCO issued the Global Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the first paragraph of which explicitly states: "Culture spans time and space and presents a variety of forms. This diversity is reflected in the uniqueness and richness of the different groups and societies that constitute the whole of human beings. As a resource for communication, innovation and creation, cultural diversity is necessary for mankind, just as biodiversity is necessary for nature. In this sense, it is a common heritage of mankind and should be recognized and defended to benefit future generations." A person with intercultural ability should respect the world's cultural diversity. In addition, people should enter the hearts of different cultures and understand the concerns and logic of different cultures. At the same time, a person with cross-cultural ability should also have a profound reflection ability, and be able to objectively and fairly evaluate and identify local culture and foreign culture, neither be arrogant nor belittle himself, nor worship foreign affairs, nor blindly exclude others.

As the main direct disseminator of Chinese language and Chinese culture, international Chinese teachers are an important driving force of Chinese language and Chinese culture to go international; they shoulder the sacred historical responsibility. In order to better complete the task of Chinese teaching and cultural communication, international Chinese teachers must be constantly strict with themselves, and constantly improve their cross-cultural teaching ability. Tell the "China story" well.

4. Conclusion

This paper first summarizes the previous research on cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural communication ability. Secondly, we comb the contradiction between the needs of the teaching Chinese as a foreign language and international Chinese teachers' quality and quantity. We simply summarize the current common problems of international Chinese teachers, such as the weak basic research, the weak faith of Cross-cultural teaching, the insufficient cross-cultural teaching ability, and put forward the urgency and necessity of improving the professional quality of international Chinese teachers, especially the cross-cultural teaching ability. This paper finally on how to cultivate and improve the cross-cultural teaching ability made three Suggestions: 1) to cultivate cross-cultural education belief and attitude, 2) independent learning and understand different cultural knowledge to have good cultural knowledge reserves, 3) improve cross-cultural teaching experience and set up the correct cultural view.

References

- [1] Ting Toomey, S. *Communicating across Cultures* [M]. New York: Guilford Press, 1999: 4.
- [2] Samovar, L, A. & Porter, R. E. & McDaniel, E. R. *Communication between Cultures* [M]. Boston: Wads worth, 2010: 17.
- [3] Hu Wenzhong. *Introduction to Cross-cultural Communication* [M]. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1999: 1.
- [4] Zu Xiaomei. New goals of cross-cultural ability and cultural teaching [J]. *World Chinese Teaching*, 2003 (4): 59-66.
- [5] Fantini, A. E. *Exploring and Assessing Intercultural Competence* [R]. Brattleboro, VT, 2007.
- [6] Byram M, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* [M], Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1997.
- [7] Jia Yuxin, *Intercultural Communication* [M], Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 1997.
- [8] Zhao Jinming, *Cross-cultural Thinking in International Chinese Language Education* [J], *Language Teaching and Research*, 2014 (6).
- [9] Cui Xiliang, *On the subject Positioning of International Chinese Language Education* [J], *World Chinese Language Teaching*, no. 3, 2015.
- [10] Li citing, *International Chinese Teacher Research Comment on Intercultural Teaching Ability* [J], *Development and Evaluation of Higher Education*, Volume 33, Issue 5, September 2017.
- [11] Wang Tianmiao, *become a reflective practitioner-Thinking triggered by the International Chinese Teacher Standard Thinking triggered by the International Chinese Language Teacher Standards*, [J], *Language Education and Research*, No. 2, 2010.
- [12] Xie Yi, Ma Yunpeng, *The Formation and Change of Teacher Faith* [J], *Comparative Education Research*, 2007 (6).
- [13] Zheng Xinmin, Jiang Qunying, *Research on the "Teacher Faith" issue in College English Teacher Reform* [J], *Foreign Language community*, 2005 (6).
- [14] Hanban / Confucius Institute Headquarters, *International Chinese Language Teacher Standards* [M], Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2007.
- [15] Halliday, *Notes on Teaching Chinese to Foreign Learners* [J]. *Foreign Languages in China*, 2012 (4), p. 4-8.