

# On Chinese Cultural Penetration in College English Reading Teaching

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**Abstract**—English reading teaching in college is an important aspect in cultivating students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, as well as a vital way to cultivate students' ability of using language. Many scholars have proved that language teaching and culture teaching are inseparable in reading teaching. The cultural penetration in English is emphasized by language researchers. However, a number of teachers pay more attention to words and difficult sentences in English reading teaching, they ignore Chinese traditional culture factors in reading materials and the importance of the traditional Chinese culture teaching in college. college stage is a key period of language learning. At this period, they should gradually understand Chinese traditional culture. It is a prerequisite for college students to strengthen their Chinese cultural knowledge in English learning. However, there are a few studies on the penetration of traditional Chinese culture in college English reading teaching. According to this situation, the author consults many literature surveys of recent years. From the viewpoints of students, teachers and teaching materials, the paper shows the present situation of the Chinese cultural penetration in college English reading teaching. According to the results of study, the paper puts forward some relevant teaching principles and approaches about how to conduct Chinese cultural penetration in English reading teaching.

**Index Term**—cultural teaching, college English reading, Chinese cultural penetration

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language is closely related to the culture. The college English teaching is not only closely related to the English-speaking country culture, but also is closely associated with the Chinese traditional culture. Recent years, it attracts widespread attention about Cultural Penetration in college English teaching. However, there is a bit of attention about Chinese cultural penetration in college English reading. It goes against cultivating students' cultural awareness. Because the cultural penetration in English teaching process is very important, and this importance will never be superseded by other Chinese teaching process. College English curriculum standard clearly points out that cultural consciousness is the assurance of appropriate use of language. It puts forward improving the understanding ability of the students' cultural knowledge, enhancing the students' intercultural communicative awareness and improving the ability of cross-cultural communication. The importance of the implementation of cultural teaching has attracted more and more attention in college English learning.

The paper shows current situation of Chinese cultural penetration in college English reading 1, the relationship between language and culture, principles and approaches of Chinese cultural penetration and so on. In college English reading teaching, students should think and understand Chinese culture with English thinking. What's more, students ought to survey the Chinese culture from different visual angle so that they can see more cultural exchanges and collisions about Chinese and western culture in English reading teaching process.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter mainly introduces some relevant studies of English reading teaching and culture teaching at home and abroad. Through literature search, the author finds that many scholars have studied the cultural penetration in English teaching process. The typical scholars and their ideas are as follows:

### A. Foreign Literature Review

From 1960s, many foreign linguists have discussed the English reading teaching process from different aspects in order to enrich teaching forms and methods in college English reading teaching process. In 1921, American linguist Edward Spire wrote a book named language. From this book, readers know that language is closely related to culture. He says "language cannot exist without culture, that is to say, it cannot be inherited from society, a variety of practices and beliefs. And these practices and beliefs of the overall determines are from the nature of our lives" (1921, p34). Language is the carrier of culture. It bears the weight of cultural information, refracting the characteristic of thought.

What's more, Michael Byram (1989) put forward three cultural teaching approaches: comparison method, knowledge transfer method and the method of field investigation. At present, comparison method and knowledge transfer method have gotten widely use, but the third method is still exploring. In 1990, Bachmann came up with his idea about relationship of culture and language: If readers only pay attention to language but don't know about social culture

background of it, which is equal to someone who has seen thousands of trees but has never seen a forest. As a result, it's hard for reader to comprehend language totally correct and use language properly.

Larry Smith (1971) pointed out that there were four sources of information in reading: visual sources, auditory sources, syntactic sources and semantic sources. And the information of these four sources is often repeated. If reader can make full use of other three formation sources, the visual demand will be reduced. According to this theory, American linguist Goodman (1934) believed the process of reconstructing meaning was shown by the reader according to the graph described by the author. According to description of Goodman, reading seems to be one-way communication activity. But in fact, reading is a two-way activity that affects the connection between the reader and the author.

Lado (1964) points out the relationship between language and culture. He thinks that it is impossible to teach a good language without the knowledge of the relevant background information. In the present English reading teaching, many teachers only pay attention to language knowledge (vocabulary, grammar, sentence pattern analysis, etc.) teaching, ignoring cultural knowledge teaching. In order to cultivate students' interest in learning English, English teachers should make a clear teaching goal because cultural teaching is an important part of English teaching. And cultural teaching plays an important role in English reading teaching. Lado (1967) publishes a book named *Language teaching: A scientific Approach*. In this book, he points out that the rich cultural background information should be embedded in foreign Language Teaching. Teachers cannot reach prospective Language teaching goal without mastering the cultural background information. Language is a part of culture. Therefore, without understanding the patterns and norms of culture, it is impossible to really learn the language. He thinks it's a key way about the local language culture in the culture teaching.

### B. *Domestic Literature Review*

In 1980s, Xu Guozhang made a speech named "The Cultural Connotations of Words and English Teaching", which is the beginning of cultural penetration at home. YuangChunBo. (2017) as a representative scholar of the Chinese cultural penetration in English teaching, he thinks improving Chinese cultural penetration in English teaching is a good way of inheriting and carrying forward the Chinese excellent traditional culture, enhancing cross-cultural communication and training dialectical culture awareness of students. For the deficiency of Chinese cultural penetration in English teaching, teachers should adjust contents of English textbook properly. At the same time, improving teachers' quality is necessary in senior high school.

HuangJianBing (2013) thinks language is closely related to the culture. While teacher teaches language, he should penetrate culture knowledge in language teaching process. It is useful to train the cross-cultural communication ability of students with combining language teaching and culture teaching. PeiYan. (2014) explains "cultural barriers to reading comprehension". This concept is divided into three types, namely, high-level cultural barriers, mass cultural barriers and deep cultural barriers. He thinks cultural barriers exist in all aspects of reading teaching process and language materials. Learners making full use of these methods can help themselves overcome the cultural barriers in reading comprehension, these three methods are establishing and strengthening cultural consciousness, increasing the sensitivity of cultural differences and training intercultural thinking with a planned way of system culture".

In a word, although domestic scholars' research can promote the development of Chinese cultural teaching and language teaching in theory and practice, the study of Chinese cultural teaching is hysteric. Although we have already emphasized the interaction between native language culture and target language culture, we are still relatively backward in theory creation and research methods. Democratic Chinese cultural teaching mode is still only at the level of the result, so the research on cultural teaching has a long way to go.

## III. CURRENT SITUATIONS OF CHINESE CULTURAL PENETRATION IN COLLEGE ENGLISH READING TEACHING

### A. *The Relationship between Language and Culture*

Language and culture are closely related to each other, the learning of language inevitably involves different cultural background information. Language is the carrier of culture, it inevitably contacts with different culture in the process of learning a language, especially in English reading teaching process. About cultural penetration, reading barriers of reading comprehension not only exist in knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. The cultural background knowledge in the article may also affect the correct understanding of the article.

On the one hand, language is the carrier of culture and the material expression form of culture. The expression of culture can't be separated from language. The formation of the human mind about a language must be conducted by forms of language expression. Therefore, human thinking process is reflected in language with vocabulary and sentence structure. Among them, vocabulary is the most obvious tool for carrying cultural information. In addition to some core words in the language, many vocabularies contain specific cultural information, which is called "culture-loaded words". In addition, idioms, allusions and proverbs are closely related to the cultural traditions of certain ethnic groups. Sentence structure and discourse structure in language also reflect the way of thinking of one nation in a way.

On the other hand, culture is the base of language, and language cannot exist without culture. In other words, culture is the foundation about formation and development of language. Cultural development and change is the driving force of language formation and development. The famous American anthropologist Smith(1983) said a famous saying that "language has a base, and speakers of a language belong to a race or several race. Any language cannot exist without

culture, that is to say, any language cannot be separated from social life. Instead, it depends on social customs and cultural beliefs." Famous British linguist Lyons (1983) argues the restriction of language system. The language system is a kind of "underlying structure", namely the human common physical characteristics and the original structure of the world. In dictionary, Penetration means when something or someone enters or passes through something, especially when this is difficult. Chinese cultural penetration of English reading teaching in college means that teachers use a variety of teaching methods penetrate cultural knowledge to students, such as history geography, local conditions, customs, daily life and so on. All of these is related to knowledge of Chinese traditional culture. The new teaching materials of college English reading teaching are associated with nature, society and humanity with cultural content, which has a considerable breadth and depth. Each reading article reflects a certain cultural knowledge.

#### *B. Current Situation of English Reading Teaching in High School*

The English reading class in high school pays more attention to the students' reading skills training, because reading skills training can be very effective to make students grasp the knowledge of English. At the same time, it can enhance the reading comprehension ability of student and strengthen the learning ability of English subject. Although senior English reading teaching can make students get effective promotion, however, there are many problems in actual English teaching process. And it's hard to reach the ideal teaching effect. Last but not least, these problems make high school students have some resistance to reading teaching, which is very bad for high school English reading teaching. First of all, many teachers ignore the students' main role. In the present stage of English reading teaching, many teachers still keep the traditional thoughts. They think that teacher is the only key player in the classroom and the teacher authority is most important. The high school English teacher in English class is very responsible, because their English reading teaching process can be done very well. But for students, it's not good, because they do not have an independent thinking. This way of teaching can only let students remember the words, grammar, some basic language knowledge, and the formation of its systematic framework. However, it is a non-active learning process for students, which cannot improve students' learning interest and English level. Then, a lot of teachers ignore the cultivation of students' learning interest. In the current college English reading teaching, many teachers hold a view that textbooks are the authoritative books that enable students to rapidly improve their scores. Therefore, the teacher does not want the students to spend their time and energy on reading after class, but spend a lot of time in textbooks and various exercises. The long and repetitive sinking into a tedious sea of questions leads students feel resistance to Chinese culture in English reading teaching. As a result, students' interest of learning Chinese culture is reduced. Last but not least, a number of teachers ignore the Chinese culture in English teaching process. English is not only a subject, but also a language with profound cultural heritage. However, in English reading teaching, many teachers only pay attention to the teaching of knowledge content but ignore the cultivation of English national culture awareness. In English reading teaching, one of the disadvantages is that students can grasp the meaning of words and sentences, but it is difficult to understand the thought of the whole article. So it's necessary to improve Chinese cultural penetration of English reading teaching.

The theme of college English reading teaching materials is extensive. It relates to English country's political history, geography, physiognomy, folk customs and biographies, but it less involves in addition to the target language countries and cultural knowledge, especially information about the culture with Chinese characteristics. About Chinese elements in the English teaching material, The author makes detailed research and analysis from four books of New Horizon College English .According to the date analysis, although 30% content involves the Chinese elements, it concentrates mainly on exercises which is about Chinese culture. So it is unevenly distributed and the content range is too narrow in the textbooks. In addition, Chinese cultural elements in English teaching have been neglected for years. Therefore, English learners can only be embarrassed when they encounter situations where they need to express Chinese culture in English. The student is an important factor of Chinese cultural penetration in college reading teaching too. Most students have few interests in Chinese culture. Cultivating interest of learning Chinese excellent traditional culture is necessary. So changing the traditional concept of teaching in English reading class can make students learn more knowledge. On the contrary, in the traditional classroom, the teacher using traditional teaching methods makes many students feel listless in class, as a result, the learning efficiency is very low. Cultivating students' interest of Chinese culture can make students learn English knowledge spontaneously and learn English national culture and English knowledge independently. From the process of cultivating students' interest of Chinese culture, students grow their cultural experiences, as well as appreciate the charms of the Chinese culture. At the same time, it increases students' interest of learning English and improves the efficiency of English learning.

### IV. PRINCIPLES OF CHINESE CULTURAL PENETRATION IN COLLEGE ENGLISH READING TEACHING

#### *A. Practical Principle*

Chinese cultural penetration is very important in senior high school. There are some principles should be followed when teacher penetrates Chinese culture in English reading teaching 1. Practical principle requires the practical application in English reading teaching process, for example, cultural import contents should be closely related to the details of the reading materials. Besides, cultural contents not only are involved in daily communication, but also take into account the career of students in the future. Of course, there are some other factors. So on the one hand, students

don't think the relationship between language and culture is too abstract and empty. Instead, it is closely associated with language communication practice. On the other hand, Chinese cultural teaching can inspire students' interest in learning both the language and Chinese excellent traditional culture.

In order to promote Chinese cultural penetration of English teaching reading, teacher should use different ways so that to reach a good teaching efficiency. The practice in English reading teaching refers to that the cultural teaching in the classroom should not only be limited to the teacher's explanation, but also should increase the interaction between teachers and students. A simple teacher's explanation of cultural knowledge may make students feel monotonous and dull so that cannot receive good teaching results. In addition, the teaching method should have characteristics of the diversity of culture. For example, in order to make students feel more immersive atmosphere of Chinese culture. Teacher can let students watch some relevant slide shows, videos, films and so on.

#### *B. Periodic Principle*

The content of cultural penetration should be carried out under guidance with the principle of gradual progress. Because the learner's cognitive development is distinguished, which is a process from simple to complex. The content of the reading material culture teaching should be based on students' language level and accept ability. What's more, Chinese cultural penetration should be from the simple to complex level. The content of specific cultural event is a general cultural theme, which is the social culture of the target language comprehensive understanding.

In particular, in the primary stage of English reading teaching, Chinese cultural teaching just stay on surface of culture, such as vocabulary, idiom, grammar and discourse, all of these should be explained. In the intermediate stage of teaching, the emphasis should be placed on middle-level culture. In another word, cultural background knowledge and non-verbal communication should be paid more attention. In the advanced stage of English reading teaching, the key point should be placed on strengthening the deep culture, namely the analysis and comparison of cultural phenomena.

#### *C. Appropriate Principle*

Appropriate principle is related to teaching contents and teaching methods. In terms of teaching content, cultural items should be considered as representative purposes. It should be explain in detail that the content is representative and belongs to mainstream culture. What's more, it should deal with the cultural content of the relationship between the diachronic and synchronic. English reading teaching should put emphasis on the synchronic culture on the contemporary culture, introducing some appropriate contents, as a result, students can understand some cultural customs and traditions through this way.

The content of English reading teaching is broad and complex, but the teaching time is limited. So the teacher's explanation is selective and limited. Therefore, in addition to the teacher's explanation, teachers should pay more attention to the interaction with students. Then, teacher should encourage students to do a lot of extracurricular reading practices. And at last, teacher should increase the accumulation of cultural knowledge. Especially in practice, teacher should create the opportunity to practice so that students are able to apply what they have learned in real or simulated situations with Chinese cultural knowledge. It's also a good way to deepen students' ability of understanding cultural knowledge and to improve learners' intercultural communicative competence. Furthermore, it stimulates students' enthusiasm to participate in and improve the effect of cultural teaching of English reading process in senior high school.

#### *D. Comparative Principle*

Comparative principle refers to comparing native culture and the target language culture during the cultural teaching. Teachers in cultural comparison should pay more attention to cultivating the cultural tolerance of students, as well as improve understanding ability and open learning attitude. It is a useful way to deepen students' understanding of the target language culture and native culture. At the same time, it's an effective approach to understand the cultural orientation of different countries and nations. In addition, the cultural comparison also should have the thought of cultural relativism, because Chinese and foreign cultural differences are not cultural criticism, but a way to understand the cultural differences and to deepen the understanding of native culture.

Comparative method is also a very important mean for Chinese cultural penetration of English reading teaching in senior high school. There are differences between Chinese and western culture in language communication, such as non-verbal communication, thinking mode and values. Only by contrast can learners discover the distinction of the mother tongue and the target language, discovering the similarities and differences between the language and culture, removing the reading obstacles and improving the ability of English reading comprehension.

### V. APPROACHES OF CHINESE CULTURAL PENETRATION IN COLLEGE ENGLISH READING TEACHING

#### *A. Improving Teachers' Cultural Awareness*

In order to strengthen Chinese cultural penetration of English reading teaching and reach a good teaching result, people should make effects from different ways such as teacher, students and teaching materials. Teacher should improve Chinese cultural awareness. And students should be given more attention to their subjectivity. What's more, cultivating students' interest of Chinese culture is very important. Finally, textbook should be increased more Chinese cultural elements.

First of all, improving teacher's Chinese cultural literacy is very important. Teachers should establish a correct attitude towards Chinese cultural teaching. For example, teachers should handle the relationship between language teaching and cultural teaching, as well as set up the correct view of language and culture. Moreover, teachers ought to become excellent book readers. Teachers have a positive attitude towards the implementation of cultural teaching in reading. As a result, learners can actively integrate cultural teaching into language teaching in the course of English teaching process.

However, in some schools, many teachers are not aware of the importance of Chinese cultural teaching, and Chinese cultural teaching is not really implemented in English reading teaching. On the one hand, in the process of implementation about Chinese cultural teaching in English reading class, teachers must realize the relationship between language and culture, as well as the relationship between language teaching and cultural teaching. On the other hand, teachers should focus on cultivating the neutral cultural learning attitude in the process of introducing Chinese and foreign cultures, which is to give learners the idea of cultural relativity. It also shows that the imparting of cultural knowledge includes both English culture and Chinese traditional culture.

### *B. Cultivating Students' Cultural Interest*

Firstly, students should be given enough subjectivity. The teacher should pay attention to the students' subjectivity in the teaching design. The teacher is only the guide and instructor of the student. At the traditional class of English reading teaching, it is impossible to bring the new teaching method into the classroom, because it breaks the outdated thinking of the teacher as the authoritative subject and the central role of the English teaching class. In English reading teaching class, it is a teacher's job that guide students and help students learning independently.

Secondly, students should expand reading after class or participate in intercultural communication activities in extracurricular time. Furthermore, students should actively improve English expression ability to Chinese culture. Teachers can arrange extra-curricular reading related books of teaching materials. For example, Beijing Wuzhou Press published a dream of red mansions story (English version) in 2012. Peking University Press published Society and Culture in Ancient China. Learners obtain information from reading, and through a series of activities such as internal organization in the brain, assimilation, integration, processing, the most information will eventually come into their own knowledge or skills.

In addition, students can use their spare time to participate in intercultural exchange activities, such as strengthening interaction with foreign students. Cross-cultural communication activities can make learners cultivate consciousness of cross cultural communication under the unconscious. It's a good chance of experience across culture and the development field of vision. At the same time, it can stimulate learners' cultural learning interest and reduce the fatigue feeling of classroom learning, laying a good foundation for future learning.

### *C. Increasing Chinese Cultural Elements in English Teaching Materials*

In the first place, the user has rights to adjust teaching materials properly. Some teaching materials, whose combination of cultural content and language content is not enough. In response to this question, reading materials should involve as much as possible about Chinese culture-related tasks, activities, and practices. Through this way, students have more opportunities to express their views about Chinese culture, and the learning of language culture can be connected with their own life experiences, enriching their learning experience.

Furthermore, the content of the textbook should be more relevant to the knowledge of Chinese excellent traditional culture. Because cultural imparting not only includes the culture of English-speaking countries, but also involves Chinese excellent traditional culture. In addition, learners should write some articles according to reading materials. Writing articles can make learners related to the real life according to learned knowledge in the classroom.

Chinese cultural penetration is usually done through the input and output of language learning. Chinese cultural input in English reading teaching refers to selecting English materials related to Chinese culture for students to read. Chinese cultural output refers to the study of reading can set the feedback evaluation on the related topics, such as questions, requiring students to talk about the understanding of reading materials about the Chinese excellent traditional culture, or to know the difference between Chinese and western culture, etc. For example,

"How many forms of Tang does the text talk about?"

"What are the features of Tang poetry?"

"What are the features of Tang poetry?"

Such topics are answered by the learners to cultivate and improve their level and ability to express the relevant knowledge of tang poetry in English.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The paper mainly focuses on Chinese cultural penetration in college English reading teaching. In this field, not many people are concerned about this topic. Through this study, the author believes that some educational professors and college English teachers will pay more attention to improving their cultural awareness of English reading teaching. What's more, the paper puts out some approaches about how to conduct Chinese cultural penetration in college English reading teaching. For example, teachers should improve cultural awareness. And students ought to cultivate cultural

interest. Furthermore, textbooks are supposed to increase some Chinese cultural elements. The author hopes that the paper can also apply to the later research about English listening teaching, English speaking teaching, English writing teaching and so on. In other words, the research field of culture teaching can be extended to all aspects of the college English teaching.

This paper mainly uses the literature method, so it is still on the theoretical level and has not been carried out in practice. In addition, the level of the teacher is different, the level of the students is different, and the understanding of Chinese cultural penetration is different, so there is still a deficiency in this aspect.

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