

On Cultivation Of Intercultural Communication Awareness In English Vocabulary Teaching

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Abstract

Language And Culture Keep A Very Close Relationship And Are Inseparable. English Language Teaching Is Not Only To Cultivate English Language Learners' Linguistic Competence, But Also To Promote Their Intercultural Communication Competence. In Fact, English Vocabulary Teaching Is One Part Of Vital Integration In English Language Teaching. Meantime, English Vocabulary Teaching Plays An Important Role In The Cultivation Of English Language Learners' Intercultural Communication Awareness. Therefore, The Author Attempts To Expound The Significance Of Cultural Elements In English Vocabulary Teaching, Discusses About The Relationship Between Language And Culture, Stresses On The Cultural Connotations Of English Vocabulary Through The Formation Of English Language, Especially In Some Specific Words And Focuses On Some Typical Cases And Analyzes The Functions Of English Vocabulary Teaching For English Language Learners' Intercultural Communication Awareness Finally, The Author Puts Forward Some Useful Suggestions To Cultivate The English Language Learners' Intercultural Communication Awareness Through English Vocabulary Teaching.

Key Words: Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Communication Awareness,
English Language Teaching, Culture, English Vocabulary Teaching

1. Introduction

English Vocabulary Is Fundamental Of English Language Formation. English Vocabulary Teaching Is An Important Component Part Of English Language Teaching. As For English Language Learners, English Vocabulary Acquisition Is A Central Task In Second Language Acquisition. Meanwhile, It Is Vital For The English Language Learners To Learn Different Cultural Connotations From A Large Number Of English Vocabularies. And Then English Language Learners Will Be Cultivated Into Successful Language Learners With Intercultural Communication Awareness.

Since Language Is So Important To Successful Communication, Whenever Possible, Both Parties Involved In Intercultural Communication Should Seek Common Language And Attempt To Understand Cultural Differences In Using The Language. And Intercultural Communication Is Simply Defined As Interpersonal Communication Between Members Of Different Cultures. To Be Successful In Intercultural Communication, It Is Essential That English Language Learners Should Know Not Only Their Own Culture's Rules But Also The Cultural Rules Of The Person With Whom They Are Interacting. To Some Extent, Intercultural Communication Awareness Indicates "That The Cognitive Aspect Of Intercultural Communication Competence That Refers To The Understanding Of Cultural Conventions That Affect How We Think And Behave." (Cheng, 2010:35) Therefore, The Author Attempts To Expound The Significance Of Cultural Elements In English Vocabulary Teaching, Discusses About The Relationship Between Language And Culture, Stresses On The Cultural Connotations Of English Vocabulary Through The Formation Of English Language, Especially In Some Specific Words And Focuses On Some Typical Cases And Analyzes The Function Of Cultivation For English Language Learners' Intercultural Communication Awareness By English Vocabulary Teaching.

2. The Relationship Between Language And Culture

Vocabulary Is Made Of Different Words. Language Is Consisted Of Different Vocabularies. To Some Extent, Words Are Essential Of Language Formation. However, With The Formation And Development Of Language, Language Keeps A Close Relationship With Culture And Is A Part Of Culture. No Doubt, Vocabularies Are Symbols Of A Specific Language And The Primary Means By Which A Culture Transmits Its Beliefs, Values And Norms. In One Word, There Is No Language Without Vocabularies, Otherwise, There Is No Culture Without Language. We May Know More Things About The Relationship Between Language And Culture.

On The One Hand, “Language Is Influenced And Shaped By Culture;(Deng And Liu, 1989:3) It Reflects Culture. At The Same Time, Language Is Used In Contexts Of Communication, It Is Bound Up With Culture In Multiple And Complex Way. To Put It In Specific Terms, “Language Embodies Cultural Reality; Language Symbolizes Cultural Reality” (Clarire Kramsch, 2000:37)

At Watkins (1992:318) Said: “Language Is Linked To Culture In A Complex Fashion.” Language Is A Part Of Culture And The Expression Of Culture. Thus, Language Is Symbolic Representation Of A People, And It Comprises Their Historial, Social, And Cultural Backgrounds As Well As Their Approach To Life And Their Ways Of Living And Thinking. And Each Language Is Deeply Rooted In Its Culture. So, Cultural Instruction Should Bean Unavoidable Part Of Language Teaching And Vocabulary Teaching.

On The Other Hand, Culture Is An Integral Part Of A Language, And That The Understanding Of English Language Requires The Understanding Of Its Culture. The Teacher Should Introduce Cultural Background Before Learning A New Word, Especially A New Noun Word, And Tell The Language Learners How To Interpret The Word Meaning In The Light Of Cultural Background In Order To Discover And Distinguish Multiple Layers Of Meanings In A Specific Text.

In Sum, Language And Culture Are Interdependently And Inseparably Related. They Constitute An Integral Whole. Though They Are By No Means The Same, Neither Of Them Could Survive Without The Other. Metaphors Can Be Employed To Vividly Describe The Relationship Between Them. Some People Say That Language Is The Mirror Of Culture, Which Means That People See A Culture Through Its Language. Others Consider That Language Culture Together Form The Iceberg. The Visible Part Is The Language, With A Small Part Of Culture Standing Out Above The Sea Surface While The Greater Part, Lying Hidden Beneath The Surface Of The Sea, Is The Invisible Aspect Of Culture. Still Others Say That Language And Culture Make A Living Organism, By Which They Mean That Language Is Flesh And Culture Is Blood. Without Culture, Language Would Be Dead And Without Language, Culture Would Have No Shape (Jiang,2000). In One Word, Language And Culture, Different As They Are, Form A Whole.

3. Cultural Connotation Of English Vocabulary

People Know That English Language Just Like Other Languages Possesses Three Main Elements: Phonetic Element, Lexical Element And Grammatical Structure, Of Which Lexis Is The Fundamental Pillar That Supports The Huge System Of English Language And Plays An Indispensable Role In Conveying Information. Cultural Distinctions Of English Language Are Most Prominent And Widespread At The Lexical Level. Thus, Cultural Features, Especially Cultural Connotation In English Vocabulary, Will Help English Language Learners To Know And Understand Effectively The Relationship Between Language And Culture, Better Understand The Cultural Connotations Of English Vocabulary, In This Way, And Really Grasp Successfully Conveying Cultural Information That English Language Bears As Far As Possible. That Is To Say, English Language Learners Not Only Remember The Meanings Of English Vocabulary, But Also The Deep Connotations Of English Vocabulary. Needless To Say, It Is A Special Significance For English Language Learner To Learn The Cultural Connotations Of English Vocabulary.

In The Broadest Sense, Vocabulary Is A Symbolic Representation Of One Language, And It Comprises The

Historical, Social, And Cultural Backgrounds That The Language Has Its Own As Well As The Approach To Life And Their Ways Of Living And Thinking That The English Spoken People Have. And Each Language Is Deeply Rooted In Its Culture. Accordingly, Vocabulary Reflects Cultural Connotations In One Language.

3.1 Learning The Cultural Connotations Of English Vocabulary Can Help English Language Learners To Cultivate Their Intercultural Communication Awareness. For A Long Time, Learning An English Language Well Means More Than Merely Mastering Its Pronunciation, Grammar Rules, Literal Meaning Of Words. It Also Means Learning To See The Connotative Meaning Of Words Within The Cultural Context And Learning The Ways In Which English Language Reflects The Ideas, Customs And Behavior Of Their Society.

However, Cultural Connotation Of English Vocabulary Is An Integral Part Of English Language, And Learners' Understanding Of English Language Requires The Understanding Of Its Culture. The Teachers Of English Language Should Introduce Cultural Background Before Learning A New Word Or A Text And Tell The Students How To Interpret The Word Or The Text In The Light Of Cultural Differences In Order To Discover And Distinguish Multiple Layers Of Meanings In Word Or A Text.

To Some Extent, Successful English Vocabulary Teaching Should Combine The Use Of Context With A Focus On Lexical Patterns And Groupings. Context Is Crucial For The Learner To Infer The Meaning Of A New Word That Learner Encounters. By Context, It Is Understanding That It "Involves The Learner In Seeking Clues To Meaning By Following A Number Of Defined Steps Which Lead From The Form Of The Word Itself, To Its Immediate Context, And Then To Its Operation In The Surrounding Context"(Carter, 1992).

Also, Honeyfield (1977) Stresses The Importance Of Context In The Teaching Of Vocabulary. He Points Out That Ever With A Functional Vocabulary Of The Three Thousand Most Frequently Occurring Items In English, Learners Will Still Not Know Around 20 Per Cent Of The Items They Will Encounter In An Unsimplified Text. The Problem Confronting Both Teachers And Learners Is That No Course Can Provide Learners With Anything Like The Vocabulary They Will Need To Comprehend Authentic Texts. It Is Therefore Important To Provide Learners With Strategies For Inferring The Meaning Of Unknown Vocabulary From The Context In Which It Occurs Or The Different Meanings Of Known Vocabulary From Their Particular Contexts.

Hence, English Language Learners Should Unavoidably Learn Different Cultural Connotations From A Word So That They Will Be Aware That Them Not Only To Master Words' Pronunciation, Grammar Rules, Literal Meaning But Also To Learn Words' Cultural Connotative Meaning, So As To Effectively Promote Linguistic Competence And Communicative Competence. Also, The English Language Learners Will Be Gradually Cultivated To Have Their Own Intercultural Communication Awareness.

3.2 Learning The Cultural Connotation Of English Vocabulary Can Help English Language Learner To Better Understand The Cultural Characteristics Of English Language, So As To Enhance Their Intercultural Communication Competence.

English Language Learner Clearly Knows That They Should Have A Lot Of English Reading And Special Courses Of English Culture Study And Then They May Master Cultural Connotation Of English Vocabulary Because Most Of The English Vocabulary Listed In Textbooks And Dictionaries Is Not Flanked By Explanations Of Cultural Meaning. In China, Some English Language Teachers Are Influenced A Lot By The Grammar-Translation Method And Have Some Wrong Thoughts About That If The Learner Had Have Good Fundamental Of The Pronunciation And Grammar Of English Vocabulary And Remembered A Lot Of Words By Their Hearts, The Learner Would Certainly Master English Language Quite Well.

At The Same Time, English Language Teacher Have Very Heavy Teaching Workloads And Have Limited Time In The Big Size Class, Most Of The English Language Teacher Usually Have Attached Little Attention

To Interpreting The Specific Cultural Connotation Of English Vocabulary. As For Learners, When They Meet An English New Word, They Generally Depend On English Language Teacher And All Sorts Of English Dictionaries To Give Them The English For A Chinese Word, Or The Chinese For An English Word, Without Learning Very Carefully The Individual Connotation Of The Word, The Learners Therefore Can Not Catch The Exact Meaning Of Some Specific English Words Or Can Not Choose The Proper Words To Express Themselves About Some Things Or Some Accidents. We Take One English Word “Individualism” As An Example. The Chinese Learners Always Think This English Word Means “Selfish”, “Thinking More About The Needs, Happiness, Etc, Of Their Own Than About Other People”. But, This Word Originally Means “The Belief That Individual People In Society Should Have The Right To Make Their Own Decisions, Etc, Rather Than Be Controlled By The Government,” “ The Quality Of Being Different From Other People And Doing Things In Your Own Way”.(Wehmeier,2004:899) Needless To Say, One Word Represents Only One Or Two Meanings Of Their Own, But Also Reflects The Beliefs And Values From Another Culture.

4. Measures Of English Vocabulary

In English Vocabulary Teaching, The English Language Teachers Should Know How To Improve The Learners’ Understanding Cultural Connotations Of English Vocabulary. The Author Put Forward Some Useful Suggestions On Pedagogical Approaches For Efficient English Vocabulary Teaching And Improving The Learners’ Intercultural Communication Awareness. Therefore, The English Language Teachers Should Pay More Attention On Their Teaching Methods, So As To Improve Their Linguistic Competence And Communicative Competence.

- 4.1 English Language Learners Should Be Broadened About The Depth And Breadth Of English Vocabulary Knowledge Through Their English Reading And Listening. Especially, English Reading And Listening Materials May Cover A Wide Range Of Subjects – Humanities, Politics, Military Affairs, Science, History, Economy, Etc. More Attention, Especially In Class, Should Be Paid To The Depth And Breadth Of English Vocabulary, Specially Including The Cultural Connotation Of English Vocabulary, Which Is Of Great Significance As Well. Just As Hulstijn(2001:266)Says That “Most Vocabulary Items Are Acquired ‘Incidentally’, That Is , As A By-Product Of The Learner Being Engaged In A Listening, Reading, Speaking Or Writing Activity”. Incidental Vocabulary Learning Occurs As “Learners Are Focused On Something Other Than Word Learning Itself” (Paribakht & Wesche, 1999:196). In This Way, The More Relevant Cultural Information The English Language Learners Have, The Easier The English Language Learners’ Understanding English Culture Will Be.
- 4.2 English Language Learners Should Be Developed In Intercultural Awareness Through Learning Cultural Connotation Of English Vocabulary Because English Culture Is An Integral Part Of English Language And Rooted In English Language. Also, Effectively Mastering English Language Requires English Language Learners To Better Understand Its Culture. The English Language Learners Would Obtain The Cultural Knowledge From Given New Words And Would Respect, Tolerant And Accept Different Cultures, And Have Real Intercultural Awareness To Communicate With People From English Cultural Background. Hence, The English Teachers Should Introduce Cultural Background And Connotation Of Given New English Words And Tell The English Language Learners How To Interpret The English Text Or Materials In Class Due To Cultural Differences In Order To Discover And Distinguish Multiple Layers Of Meanings In A Text.
- 4.3 English Language Learners Should Be Encouraged To Use Different Basic Methods For Learning New English Words. For Example, The English Language Teachers Should Ask The Learners Or The Students To Exploit Available Information To Guess Passage Ideas And Predict Outcomes, And Then Should Let The

Learners Know Understanding Involves More Than Mere Linguistic Decoding And Tell The Learners How To Identify The Meaning According To The Situation. Finally, The English Language Teachers Should Proceed From A Familiar Framework By Using Familiar Instances To Exemplify Unfamiliar Ones, And Fill In Missing Information To Bridge The Gap Between The Material Context And The Learners' Existing Knowledge Of English Culture. The English Language Learners Should Associate The Known With The Unknown While Learning Some New English Words. Especially, The English Language Teachers Should Require The Learners To Attach Much Attention To The Cultural Connotation Of New English Words.

5 Conclusion

As For English Language Teachers, English Vocabulary Teaching Is One Of Main English Language Teaching Tasks. Especially, English Vocabulary Is Important Component Part Of English Language. Meanwhile, The English Language Teachers Should Clearly Know The Relationship Between Language And Culture, Understand The Cultural Connotations Of English Vocabulary In Order To Enhance English Learners' Intercultural Communication Awareness. Because The English Learners' Intercultural Communication Awareness Has Occupy The Vital Position In Cultivating English Learners' Intercultural Communication Competence, The English Language Teachers Should Attach Great Attention To English Vocabulary Teaching And Take Some Practical Measures To Teach English Language Learners To Master The Cultural Connotations Of English Vocabulary Such As Broadening About The Depth And Breadth Of English Vocabulary Knowledge Through English Reading And Listening Materials Including Different Subject Of English Society, Introducing Cultural Background And Connotation Of Given New English Words And Using Different Basic Methods For Learning New English Words, Etc. Only In This Way, The English Language Learners Can Be Really Encouraged To Learn New English Words From An Intercultural Perspective And Really Understand The Cultural Connotations Of English Vocabulary, So As To Improve Their Intercultural Communication Awareness, And Finally Enhance Their Intercultural Communication Competence.

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