

Strategies on Implanting Traditional Culture in English Education in Leshan Yi District*

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Through the survey on status of English education and national culture implantation in the middle school in Ebian and Mabian Yi Autonomous County of Leshan city, aiming at solving the current problems, the paper puts forward some strategies which can effectively improve the quality of English education and the implantation of national traditional culture in Yi areas, such as strengthening English learning motivation, improving teachers' multi-cultural awareness, promoting students' cultural identity, introducing group learning activities, exploring educational reform models, etc.

Keywords: Yi nationality, English education, national culture, strategy

Introduction

China is a multi-ethnic country dominated by Han nationality. In the long history, the ethnic groups have formed different political, economic, religious, and other cultural concepts, which have its own advantages and disadvantages. Yi minority is one of the ancient minorities in southwest of China. For the factors of geographic location, the people's overall education level in this area is relatively low, especially the English education.

General Situation of the Research

The research focuses on current English education in Mabian and Ebian Yi Autonomous County of Leshan city and finds out some effective ways to carry out English education and national culture education simultaneously in middle schools. The research objects include 200 students (including 120 male students and 80 female students) and 18 teachers in junior and senior high schools .

The survey is conducted by means of questionnaires and individual interviews. Two hundred questionnaires are issued and received fully. Besides, there are 33 individual interviews, including 20 junior high school students and 13 senior high school students, 18 boys and 15 girls. The selected objects cooperate better.

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Significance of the Research

Exploring the ways of English education and national culture education simultaneously in Yi district is helpful to promote the Yi students' humanistic quality and form the recognition of identity of the national culture. Also the research contributes to implanting traditional culture through English education and effectively enhances the Yi students' cultural literacy, helping them to form national cultural identity and promote national harmony and unity to some degree. The research will apply multi-culture educational theory, combining the regional characteristics especially the situation of English learning in Yi district, to explore the series of effective methods to learn national culture in English education.

The Status Quo of National Culture Education in English Education in Yi District

Aspects of Teachers

Based on the analysis of teachers' roles in English teaching and status of cultural implantation, the survey focuses on teacher's understanding of English education requirements for the students, the emphasis in English teaching, the attitudes towards cultural education, and so on.

The survey data of Table 1 & 2 show that about 16% English teachers think that English teaching is a grammar and vocabulary course and about 84% think English teaching is language and culture teaching, while 27.8% ask students to master grammar and vocabulary and 50% think that students should be required to master the language and cultural background information.

Table 1

Teacher's Understanding of English Education

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Language teaching	0	0%
Grammar and vocabulary teaching	3	16%
Language and culture teaching	15	84%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=18).

Table 2

Teacher's Requirement of Students

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Master basic language skills	4	22.2%
Master grammar and vocabulary	5	27.8%
Master basic language skills and cultural information	9	50%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=18).

But in the class, most teachers lay the emphasis on the different teaching contents, which also has prevented the student directly from learning Chinese culture. During the course of English teaching design, it is usually the combination of the basic language ability (listening, reading, and writing), grammar, and vocabulary and culture language. These three categories are the key teaching points. Most people think that English teaching should focus on the basic language ability, namely listening and speaking, reading and writing ability; 33.3% teachers regard grammar, vocabulary, and syntax as the center; only 16.7% teachers take the cultural background information as focus (see Table 3). With the restriction of teaching system and teaching objective, only a small

number of English teachers are able to infiltrate the culture education into language teaching. With fewer hours and stronger aim of the college entrance examination, more teachers have chosen to develop students' solid reading and writing ability. Too many language points and rigid standard of exercise time make the teachers have no time to take the cultural dissemination and the inheritance into account.

Table 3

Teacher's Teaching Priorities

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Basic language skills	9	50%
Grammar vocabulary and syntax	6	33.7%
Basic language skills and culture information	3	16.7%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=18).

Whether culture education should be involved in English teaching, there are some different ideas. Fifty percent (50%) respondents hold that it should be added for popularization and dissemination of cultural knowledge in English teaching, while 33.3% respondents think it is not essential to add culture education into English education (see Table 4). Most teachers (more than 72.2%) also believe that cultural education should be properly introduced into the teaching content (see Table 5).

Table 4

Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Implementation of Culture Education in English Teaching

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Agree	9	50%
Uncertain	3	16.7%
Unnecessary	6	33.3%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=18).

Table 5

Teachers' Efforts to Implement Culture Education

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Often	9	50%
Occasionally	4	22.2%
Merely or never	5	27.8%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=18).

Recently culture education is more or less considered by educators. But not all teachers really well understand culture education. According to the survey, 55% teachers fully understand what the infiltration of culture education is, but still 45% teachers do not fully understand what it is (see Table 6).

Table 6

Teacher's Understanding of Infiltration of Culture Education

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Understand	10	55%
Can't understand	0	0%
Understand incompletely	8	45%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=18).

Those teachers who agree to infiltrate culture education into English teaching have their own characteristics and styles and the distinction is teachers' different choices in culture education contents. According to the survey, 72% teachers only talk about the Western culture and 28% teachers will compare Chinese and Western cultures in the class (see Table 7). More teachers will adopt the form of cultural activities for students to experience the culture. According to the survey, as for helping students take part in cultural activity, there are only 34% teachers doing it; 61% teachers occasionally do it while 5% teachers almost have not done it (see Table 8). About the culture input methods, there are about 77.8% teachers who like to explain it in class, while 16.7% teachers create cultural experiencing activity to teach the culture (see Table 9).

Table 7

Teaching Contents About Culture

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Only explain traditional culture	0	0%
Only explain western culture	13	72%
Explain both traditional culture and western culture	5	28%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=18).

Table 8

The Cultural Activities

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Often	6	34%
Occasionally	11	61%
Never	1	5%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=18).

Table 9

The Way Teachers Input the Culture

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Explanation	14	77.8%
Cultural experiencing activities	3	16.7%
Others	1	5.5%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=18).

Aspects of Students

The survey questionnaire is designed according to students' attitudes towards English learning, interests or Western culture and traditional culture, etc. The survey data show 32.5% students like English, 42% students hold a little bit of interest in English, 18.5% students do not like English, and 7% of them cannot determine their attitudes towards English learning (see Table 10). From the data, we can see most students are also interested in English.

Table 10

Attitudes Towards English Learning

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Like	65	32.5%
Have a little interest	84	42%
Dislike	37	18.5%
Uncertain	14	7%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=200).

When it comes to Western culture and Chinese traditional culture, students show more interest in both of them. The data show about 16.5% students are very interested in Western culture and 62.5% students have a certain interest, while 14% students are not interested in the Western culture and 7% students are not sure whether they like Western culture or not. About traditional culture, 42% students are very interested in it, 47% students have a certain interest in traditional culture, and 5% students are not interested in it, while 6% of them are not clear about their attitudes (see Table 11 & 12). From the data, we can see so many students are interested in Chinese traditional culture.

Table 11

Interests in Western Culture

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Lots of interest in it	33	16.5%
Little interest in it	125	62.5%
No interest in it	28	14%
Uncertain	14	7%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=200).

Table 12

Interests in Traditional Culture

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Lots of interest in it	84	42%
Little interest in it	94	47%
No interests in it	10	5%
Uncertain	6	6%

Note. Composition of Sample (N=200).

Strategies on Implanting Traditional Culture During English Education in Yi District

Through the study, we can find some existing difficulties and problems in implanting traditional culture during English teaching, so some strategies are given below.

Strengthen the Student's Motivation for Learning English

The purpose of learning English is different. Some students learn English in order to read books; some students hope to understand Western way of thinking; some students learn English for spreading Chinese culture. The learning motivation is one of the most important emotional factors that affect the English learning effect (LI & LIU, 2015). So strengthening the students' motivation for English learning is beneficial for students to well use English to learn and spread the traditional national culture.

Improve the Teachers' Multi-cultural Awareness

According to Sapir Edward (2002), an American linguist, culture is what we are doing and thinking for society and language is a specific way to express one's thought. Language teaching is closely related to culture. Contemporary English education requires English teachers to enrich cultural background knowledge including oriental and occidental cultures. The contemporary English education is a kind of culturally sensitive teaching and the culturally sensitive teaching needs culturally sensitive teachers (TIAN & LIN, 2015). Language and culture are closely interrelated, so it is important to penetrate culture into the course of English teaching. Therefore, teachers should form a multi-cultural awareness.

Study Western and Chinese Cultures Comparatively

In English education, there are lots of cultural contents. As for the different culture, comparative analysis of the similarities and dissimilarities between them is very important, which can help students to well understand the culture. Besides, the activities for experiencing different cultures should be adopted. In this way, students can strongly feel the culture vividly and eliminate the contradictions or conflicts caused by cultural differences, so as to form a correct concept for different culture.

Cultivate Student's Cultural Identity

Students in Yi district have much interest in their own culture, because national identity represents the strong sense belongings of the national members (CAO, 2014). So they have relatively little resistance to learning traditional cultures during learning English. Influenced by exam-oriented educational system, English education overemphasizes English study and neglects culture teaching. As a result, students cannot know or well understand the traditional culture, which leads to the insufficient recognition of Chinese culture. English teaching is not only a language education but also a culture education. It is easy for the students in the environment full of culture elements to construct cultural identity, which contributes positively to implanting traditional culture in English education in Yi district.

Revise School-Based English Textbooks and Introduce Local Traditional Culture

The textbooks plays a key role in English teaching (AN, 2012). So during the selection of teaching materials, the textbook with national cultural contents must be taken into consideration. While among the current textbooks, few list Chinese traditional culture or the comparison between Western and Chinese culture as main content. So school may take some measures to revise and enrich contents about traditional culture based on Yi district, such as adding some new ethnic contents, experiencing ethnic activities, revising Chinese/English bilingual version textbook, etc.

Conclusion

Through the analysis, we find the situation is disappointing. So we must take some effective measures to improve it, such as to strengthen the motivation for English learning, to improve the teacher's multi-cultural awareness, to enhance students' cultural identity, to revise school-based English textbooks and introduce local traditional culture, etc. I believe the implantation of national traditional culture in English education in Yi nationality area will be strengthened if the measures mentioned above can be carried out consistently and properly.

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