



The Role of Teachers in Intercultural Language Teaching

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Abstract: This paper analyzes relevant theory about intercultural language learning, the teacher's role in developing critical intercultural pedagogy and changes recommended in intercultural language teaching. In the end, it concludes that the role of teachers is crucial.

Keywords: role, teacher, intercultural language teaching

1. Introduction

Today, with the rapid development of modern foreign language education, it is important to improve students' cross-cultural competence. In recent years, more and more classroom activities emphasize specific cross-cultural knowledge. A few years ago, I did an internship in a junior high school as an English teacher. Due to my lack of experience, I often listen to the tutor's lectures. There is a topic in the textbook called "Around the World", which will introduce some cross-cultural stories and customs. However, my instructor skipped this content in class, and my instructor explained to me that the main focus of learners is "oral skills", so knowledge about cross-cultural development is only a supplement. He also believes that intercultural competence is only needed when "racial" students appear in the classroom.

2. Relevant theory about intercultural language learning

Byram (2003) believes that it is important to take cross-cultural action between two cultures. Intercultural competence can be thought of as the ability to behave appropriately when encountering the behaviors and attitudes of other cultures. (Meyer, 1991). In order to adapt to the trend of globalization, teachers and learners must have the knowledge and skills appropriate to the specific culture (Economic Development Council, 2006). Cultivating the ability to interact with people from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds is crucial. People from different cultures, experiences, and races seem to encounter predictable problems and dialogue processes when they first meet (Brian H. and Gabrielle).

Compared with the cross-cultural perspective, critical cross-cultural pedagogy shows a significantly more controversial view (Guilherme, 2002). In this regard, if teachers want to improve students' cross-cultural competence, education focused on literature and linguistics may not be sufficient for teachers. Therefore, such education should also include non-linguistic studies such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Subject. Take it into account (Windmuller, 2011).

Puren believes that the most significant feature of behaviorism is the emphasis on cultural dimensions in foreign language teaching (2006). Consider the factors of intercultural competence, five "skills" and subjects that may be helpful for classroom teaching (blog5, 2020). In the process of foreign language education, intercultural pedagogy will provide knowledge of four general and communicative skills. In an action-oriented approach, learners act as social actors. Therefore, the interaction between students and the target language and culture is reflected in the dimensions of language expression and behavior (Gizem & Gulnihal, 2018).

3. The teacher's role in developing critical intercultural pedagogy

Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) define cross-cultural communication as a process of symbolic exchange in which people from different cultures seek negotiable meaning in the communicative environment embedded in the social system. In this regard, improving students' cross-cultural competence is what teachers must do.

Since the aims of language education are now widely emphasizing on both language-using competence and intercultural competence. Therefore, the responsibility and positive function of teachers are of great importance (Garrido&Alvarez,2006). As language teachers, they not only can facilitate the interaction between target culture and student 'own', but also can promote their intercultural awareness. However, according to Kate Naidu (2020), part of teachers did not present themselves as 'experts' on diverse cultures, or play themselves in an authoritative position to remark one culture causally. Rather, they gradually realized their limitations about how to understand one specific cultural phenomenon in teaching process and how to explain it to students. In the long run, teachers become reluctant to mention complex intercultural phenomenon, which can be embodied in the context that the author mentioned in previous chapter.

From the perspective of anthropologists, it seems difficult for teachers to embody conceptual awareness in sociocultural theory (Kate Naidu, 2020). From the perspective of Kohler (2015), the role of the teacher should be seen as a mediator. Therefore, teachers urgently need to understand the concepts of intercultural pedagogy (Byram & Kramsch, 2008), so as to use these concepts to help students acquire new abilities. Research by the European Commission found that teachers sometimes exaggerate their support for the cross-cultural language learning process (Crozet, 2016). Sercu (2001, 2002) also pointed out that not all teachers have enough self-awareness to cultivate cross-cultural competence. In addition, in order to avoid encountering unfamiliar cross-cultural knowledge, teachers usually just skip the relevant content, because it is difficult for them to accept the fact that they actually lack relevant cross-cultural competence or professionalism. For example, as I mentioned above, my mentor is reluctant to spend time teaching cross-cultural knowledge because he knows very little about it.

4. Changes recommended in intercultural language teaching

Most teachers have realized the importance of improving students' intercultural communication skills. According to Gizem and Gulnihal, teachers should first internalize basic and universal values before they can acquire skills. Self-centeredness is often seen as a serious inhibition in the process of intercultural teaching. In order to avoid this phenomenon, teachers should have a basic concept and treat their own culture with an objective and critical attitude.

One way to increase the intercultural sensitivity of teachers to other cultures is their empathy (Germain, 1998). Teachers' empathy also can help to create student-centered classroom with active interaction (McAllister & Irvine, 2002). Furthermore, Brock, Moore and Parks (2007) point out that the most effective teachers ascribe ineffective lessons to their own teaching, however, the less effective teachers blamed the students. According to Kanu's finding, the changes of teachers' attitudes, expectations and personal and instructional styles can extremely result in improved test scores, conceptual understanding as well as self-confidence of students (2007).

In addition to teachers' attitudes and specific teaching content, second language teachers also need to treat world English and non-native speakers as norms (Alptekin, 2002). Some teachers said that although most of the topics in the current syllabus use supplementary materials such as magazine articles or recordings, they still cannot be fully related to the actual situation of the students. More importantly, this kind of critical intercultural competence is not taken into consideration in the middle school final exams, and it is difficult to adopt an appropriate approach to cultural content.

Therefore, how to use critical methods in cross-cultural language teaching is also a serious issue that teachers need to think about. According to Guilherme (2007), teachers should spend more time exploring suitable materials, including watching foreign movies, reading novels, etc., so as to improve students' understanding of the importance of interculturalism. Communication and globalization trends (blog5, 2020).

5. Conclusion

Although teachers are aware of the importance of intercultural language teaching, many teachers are not fully prepared for the challenges that follow. In the process of language teaching, teachers are required to have relevant knowledge of literary genres and know how to interpret them from a cross-cultural perspective in the classroom. For teachers to integrate cross-cultural pedagogy into language classes by unpacking the cultural content they are dealing with, their first consideration is how to carry out this "unpacking". In addition, they also need to know how to critically reflect on the connection between language, culture and context so that learners can do this. In short, in order to improve the intercultural competence of learners, the role of teachers is crucial.

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