Integrating Intercultural Communication into Chinese Teaching and Learning: A Case Study

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Introduction

Research Background

- As Brown (1994) argued that language and culture are intricately interwoven whereby one cannot be separated from the other in language teaching and learning. Language therefore is a primary medium through which culture is expressed.

- Therefore, Chinese language teachers should be aware of the importance of knowledge of Chinese society and culture (Hsu, 2016).

Research Motivation

- The learner Anna (pseudonym) is an American student supported by the U.S. Department of State's National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y), an America scholarship immersive program of learning Chinese here in Taiwan.

- Based on her experience of learning language, she believes there is still a gap between Chinese in the classroom and real-world communication and culture.

Research Questions

1. Are there difficulties for foreign students to learn Chinese?

2. What are the impacts of integrating intercultural communication into Chinese teaching?

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Literature Review

Integrating Intercultural Communication (ICC) into Chinese Language Teaching and Learning

- Brown (1994) argued that language and culture are intricately interwoven whereby one cannot be separated from the other. Language therefore is a primary medium through which culture is expressed.

- the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) introduced the 5C's, which included Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities, for teaching foreign languages.

- Recently, the importance of developing learners' intercultural competence or awareness in foreign language learning has been paid more attention (Byram, 1997; Guilherme, 2002).

Pedagogy and Chinese Language Teaching (CLT)

- As Moloney and Xu (2016) argue, the most prominent challenge that Chinese language education faces is its pedagogy. Teaching approaches to Chinese have shifted to teaching it as a second/foreign language, along with associated shifts from the grammar-translation approach to audio-lingual and communicative/functional approaches (Cruickshank & Tsung 2011).
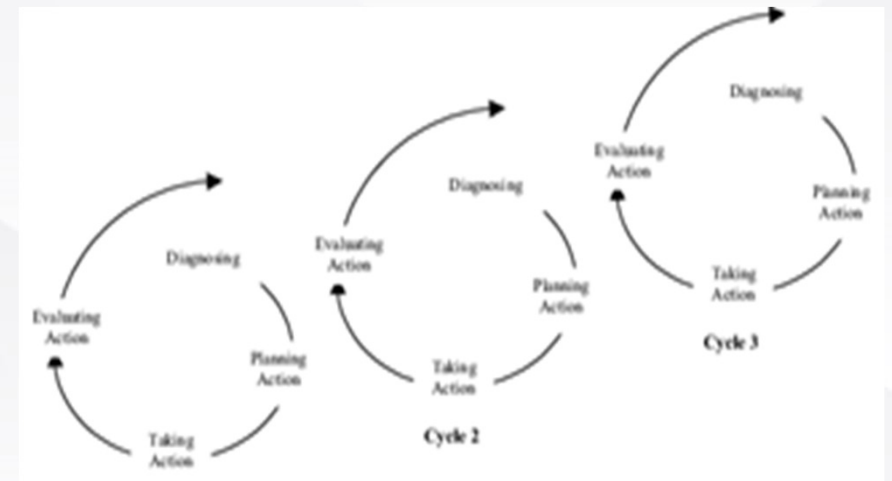
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Methodology

Research design

- Action research

  a) assessing a situation which is calling for change

  b) planning to take action

  c) take action

  d) evaluation the action

- The textbook Shídài huáyǔ (時代華語)

Research procedure

1. Oral and written "informed consent"

1. Starting the one to one tutoring for eight weeks.
   (Mar 30. ~ May 18.)

1. Selected one intercultural issue that strongly
   associate with lessons' topics that the participant
   had have learned.

Data collection and analysis

- The voice recording

- Transcript for each interview will be typed afterwards.

- Take field note

- Use discourse analysis as a research method

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Findings and Discussion

The difficulties for students to learn Chinese

- **Reflection of the difficulties**: generation gap and non-customized teaching method

> *I like learning languages by asking people about their thoughts. …So I think that this is the best method,* **far better than merely learning from a teacher or a textbook.** Because teachers may have a generation gap and the textbook is meant to fit the majority of people. ***It's not specialized to what interests you, customized to the person.*** (Interview, May 4.)

The difficulties for students to learn Chinese

- **Reflection of the difficulties**: culture should not be excluded in language course

Now this adds a cultural learning aspect … … <u>much more valuable than just teaching the student the language, because you are giving them cultural learning that is not in the classroom.</u> (Interview, May 4.)

[Fieldnote: She cannot explain enough how she was interested and confused in Chinese particles which never taught in class but being used in our daily life. For instance, 齁 (Hōu)、啦 (La)、欸 (Āi) as a suffix in the last part of a sentence. She appreciate me to tell her these minute details in our language, as it is part of our culture.] (May 11, 2022)

The impacts of integrating intercultural communication into Chinese teaching

Three dimensions:

✔ Knowledge

✔ Attitude

✔ Skill

As Byram (1997) asserted that intercultural communication competence refers to the ability of an individual to complete communicative activities effectively and appropriately in a specific environment.

The impacts of integrating intercultural communication into Chinese teaching

The Knowledge Level

*The meals that we eat at Christmas differ for each household. My family, for example, will eat …However, **none of these foods have special meanings associated with them like they do in Taiwan**, … I celebrated Chinese New Year in Taiwan with my host family. … My host family explained to the best of their ability **the meaning of the holiday and each of the foods that we ate on New Year's Eve. I also learned the meaning of Niángāo (Chinese sticky rice cake),** which I ate with my host sister.* (Interview, Mar 13.)

The impacts of integrating intercultural communication into Chinese teaching

The Attitudes Level

*… **I didn't expect people pay for me, because it isn't super common in America** … One offered to pay for my food, and **I refused because that is the polite thing to do in America.** … You could do this in America, but it is usually only common in relationships. I think in special scenarios in the United States, we would pay for a friend's meal … **In Taiwan, I would of course accept it, and part of the reason that we're all here is to learn and adapt to the parts of Taiwanese culture** that are not the same as America. …* (Interview. May 8.)

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The Skills Level

5 ….
6 **S:** … But you usually ask about **the current state that someone is in**.
7 For example: "Are you full?" ("jia ba bui?" in Taiwanese)
8 … The way of greeting people includes asking questions that show
9 them we care about their current state and well-being. …

Even though we already knew the answer to the result of what we asked, just like "knowingly asking questions" (Míngzhīgùwèn). (Line 6).

The impacts of integrating intercultural communication into Chinese teaching

Reflections of the Teachers as Researchers:

1. More context should be integrated with students' personal real-life experiences

1. Be more flexible in adjusting the teaching style to meet the needs of students

1. Balance language knowledge and cultural content

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Conclusion & Suggestion

Conclusion

The interviewee's <u>cultural awareness</u> of various themes in her lives was significantly enhanced when discussing cross-cultural issues, and she was able to break away from the framework of <u>textbook-based</u> learning in the classroom.

Suggestion

Theory and Practice

1. Future researchers can expand the scale of the study according to the source of students

1. Language teachers can incorporate cross-cultural content into classroom instruction by combining it with their original teaching methods

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