Challenges in Intercultural Language Education in China

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Abstract

It is widely recognized that the culture is inseparable from language, and it is imperative to integrate culture into language teaching. While in practice, intercultural language education in China is far from its goals and objectives. This article describes the present situation of intercultural language education and analyses the challenges that college English teachers are faced with.

Key words: Language; Culture; Intercultural communication; Challenge

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural language education has been discussed in depth by researchers and educators in America, Australia and Great Britain, and is widely advocated and carried out in classroom teaching in these areas. However, though the theory of ICLE was introduced into China for more than twenty years, there is still a long way to put intercultural language teaching theory into effective practice. Based on the discussion of the diverse definitions of language, culture, intercultural language education, and pedagogical principles, this paper describes the present ICLE situation in Chinese universities and colleges, and analyzes the challenges Chinese college English teachers are faced with.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The teaching of language and culture covers not only the discussion of the relation between language and culture, but also the pedagogy of culture and language teaching in practice. During the discussion in the past years, scholars in linguistics, applied linguistics, as well as the teachers of language recognized that language and culture are interwoven, and that teaching of culture is an integral part of language teaching (Sapir, 1961; Hymes, 1979; Byram, 1991; Kramsch, 1991). And it is worldwide advocated that culture should be integrated in foreign language teaching, which in turn gives rise to some questions for discussion. The key questions of the discussion are: What is culture in terms of foreign language teaching? How to integrate culture into foreign language teaching so that the learners will acquire culture through foreign language learning? Obviously, it is not an easy task to answer these questions. So it is necessary to have a close look at the definitions of language and culture presented by scholars from different fields, and the popular ideas about intercultural language education and its pedagogical principles.

1.1 Culture and Language

The definition of culture has always been a controversial topic in 20th century among scholars in anthropology, sociology, psychology and other disciplines. The earliest definition came from anthropologist. The definition in a broader sense was given by Tyler (1871) that culture is a complex integration of knowledge, belief, arts, law, morality, customs and the competence and habits that the members acquired in the society. Later the definition was subject to many versions of supplements and additions by other scholars.

There exist more than 300 definitions about culture. In a broad sense, culture is regarded as a unique creation distinguishing human beings from other animals, including both the inventions and the creations. While in a narrow sense, culture is only seen as mental creations of human beings (Hu, 1999). Generally, culture is studied from three perspectives: In view of anthropology which is in accordance/cope with the broad sense mentioned above; in view of social functions which focuses culture on a system of semiotics; and in view of communications which regard communication as the essence of culture (Hu, 1999). Williams (1983) generalizes culture into three domains: a general process describing the development of knowledge, mentality and arts; a lifestyle of a race, a time, a group or of the whole society; and the practice and outcome describing intelligence, especially art activities.

In chronological order, the early definitions of culture seem to be boundless and endless. Wissler defines culture as social activities covering language, marriage, properties, manners, industry, arts, etc., while his revised definition refers to culture as a life style of a tribe or a social group. Sapir regards culture as social inheritances and traditions determining life style. Dawson thinks of culture as a common lifestyle that necessary to one's adaptation to the environment and economics. Dixon's culture refers to the combinations of activities, customs and beliefs of a race. Bose's culture is a set of behaviors shared by group members. Boas' culture involves all the forms of social habits within a race or a group. Linton's culture is an integration of the mental reactions, emotions and the pattern of habitual behaviors that acquired through learning or imitating. While his later addition to culture means the lifestyles of any society. Kluckhohn's definition regards culture as an individual's lifestyle inherited from the group or the society. Ford defines culture as human behaviors for solving the social problems. Willey defines culture as an interrelated and interwoven pattern of symbols. Folsom's definition means culture is a set of tools and customs created by human beings and handed down to later generations. Other scholars like Murdock also holds this view (Hu, 1999).

However, it is not as boundless as it seems to be as all the early definitions fall into some categories. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) collected almost all the definitions of culture in anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy and natural science, and made a simplified classification in terms of topic approaches seeing culture as categories: religion, food, tools, etc.; historical approaches seeing culture as tradition or heritage; behavioral approaches seeing culture as learned and shared behavior; normative approaches seeing culture as ideas and rules for the ordering of living; functional approaches seeing culture as environmental problem-solving or adaptive behavior; mental approaches seeing culture as learned habits that inhibit biologically inherited and animal impulsiveness; structural approaches seeing culture as patterns of symbols, ideas and practices; and symbolic approaches seeing culture as arbitrary but socially shared meanings (Bianco, 2003).

Later, there come a lot of other versions. Williams (1977) associates culture with ordinary, normal and natural concerning everyday lived experience or reality, seeing culture in communication at a macro-level and dynamic-level. Geertz (1973) sees culture as the system of meaning shared within a group, and determines the perception, recognition and attitude of the members towards the world, which has a great impact on the symbolic domain. Street (1993) regards culture as a practice or a set of practices of things people do. Culture in this case is seen as a doing verb and therefore results in a dynamic version implying continuation and stability.

Hofstede (1980) divides culture into two categories, namely, first culture and second culture. The first culture is also called culture with a big C involving the human achievements in history, social institutions, and works of art, architecture, music, and literature. The second culture equals with what is called culture with a small c covering customs, traditions, or practices carried out as part of people's daily lives (Halverson, 1985).

Though there exist differences among all the definitions of culture, it doesn't mean that culture is random, or totally personal. No matter how culture is defined, the entity always refers to the behavior that is patterned, learned and social, also changing and constructed (Bianco, 2003).

The entity of culture suggests that culture possesses the following feature: a) Culture is the unique symbol to distinguish human beings from other animals, and is social inheritance rather than physiological inheritance (Hu,1999); b) Culture is not innate competence, but learned (Kluckhohn, 1952); c) The larger part of culture is subconscious. Culture is compared to an iceberg that only the tip is explicit while the tacit part remains under the water unseen (Moran, 2004); d) Culture is the guidance for people's behavior. What people say and what people do are restricted by culture (Kluckhohn, 1952); e) Culture is dynamic, living phenomenon relating to the evolution of history (Moran, 2004).

Similarly, language is a tool to express culture, and a mirror to reflect culture. Language as a means to satisfy the physical and mental needs of human beings is of the following functions: communication—people use language to transmit information, to express thoughts, emotions and attitude; recognition—people show or judge one's nationality, hometown, race, political view and religious belief by using language; promotion of cognition—by using language children form their view of the world and adults form new conception of the world as it develops; performance—to perform actions such as apology, assurance, etc. (Clyn,1994). On the whole, the meaning transmitted by language is influenced by the user's cultural background, idea of value and the context.

Language is a cultural behavior sharing these qualities. Language is unique among all the culture system, since it reflects the experiences and values of the culture it describes, and also plays an important role in forming culture. It is through language that any cultural system is preserved and transmitted, and it is language that change is negotiated and incorporated into cultural system (Bianco, 2003). Besides, with the development of the society, economy and technology, language evolves itself as the culture system changes, and is also influenced by the political system which is an important factor in language teaching/learning.

Language and culture are two separate definitions but they are overlapping and closely interrelated to each other. In Kramsch's (1998) generalization, language expresses cultural reality, displays cultural reality, and symbolizes cultural reality. That is to say, people use language to relate facts, events, ideas, belief, attitude to those who share the same experience, to communicate via medias such as telephone, letters, emails, newspapers and diagram to create new experience, and to recognize one's social identity. The cultural value in language is displayed by some interrelated and interacted dimensions, such as syntactic, morphology, semantics and pragmatics (Brogger, 1992).

Language and culture are interwoven. On the one hand, language is the carrier of culture and reflects culture changes. On the other hand, language is part of culture itself and is influenced by culture (Zhang & Ding, 2004). Street (1993) also sees language as a network of shared meaning that bears the process of bringing about the changes in culture, as language system enacting tradition.

Kramsch (1993) compares the integration of language and culture to the two sides of a coin, and recognizes that language as the vehicles of culture has duality of text and context. That is, language expresses not only an individual's thoughts and intention, but a speech community's knowledge and expectations as well. She accepts the idea put forward by Damen (1987) that culture is the fifth dimension rather than the fifth skill in addition to the other four skills of language.

The most controversial argument in the discussion of relation between language and culture is the linguistic relativity. It is believed by some scholars that differences in thinking leads to difference in utterances, and conversely, differences in utterances reveal difference in thinking(Chen, 2001; Sapir, 1929). While some scholars do not go to such an extreme that language determines thinking, and they hold the view that to some extent, language influences thinking. The revelation from the argument suggests that language as a signal reflects culture prejudice and restricts thinking, and that the context of language is of great importance in the process of coding language (Kramsch, 1998).

1.2 Teaching Language and Teaching Culture

As mentioned above that language and culture are inseparable, then teaching of a language will inevitably involve the teaching of its culture. Therefore, whatever methodology is adopted in teaching language, culture knowledge is more or less included. Teaching of culture can be carried out by means of language. However, this does not mean that teaching language is the same thing to teaching culture.

In terms of methodology, the objectives of teaching a language are different from that of teaching a culture. Learners of language are expected to achieve the outcomes during their process of learning, while the outcome of culture learning should be considered at the beginning of designing the course, as culture knowledge is learned rather than something that can be picked up by language learners. The outcome of cultural learning can be summed up as culture-specific understanding, culture-general understanding, competence, adaptation, social change and identification (Moran, 2004). The varying methodologies in teaching language centre round language skills. Ramirez (1995) proposes that teaching language should not just focus on language skills. Teaching language may be conducted by communication-based (using language in social context), proficiency-oriented (training the language skills at different levels), and interactive-based (creating communicative context) (Chen, 2001).

In teaching culture, based on the three interrelated dimensions of culture as products, practices and perspectives, Moran (2001) adds two other items to it: communities and persons, and defines

> Culture is the evolving way of life of a group of persons, consisting of a shared set of practices associated with a shared set of products, based upon a shared set of perspectives on the world, and set within specific social context. (p.24)

Language in five dimensions above serves as tools to describe cultural products, participate in cultural practices, identify, explain, justify cultural perspectives, participate appropriately in specific cultural communities, and express an individual's unique identity within the culture (Moran, 2004).

There is a significant definition in *Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century* (1996) that culture is the interplay among perspectives, practices, and products. Culture is put in central as content among the five C's (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities) in the language curriculum.

In teaching culture, language teachers and interculturalists favor the distinction between big C and little c. Big C in *Standards* is also defined as formal culture, including "the formal situations (social, political, and economic), the great figures in history, and those products of literature, fine arts, and the sciences

that were traditionally assigned to the category of elite culture" (1996, p.40). While little c is defined as "those aspects of daily living studied by the sociologist and the anthropologist: housing, clothing, food, tools, transportation, and all the patterns of behavior that members of culture regard as necessary and appropriate" (p.40).

In mentioning foreign language classroom teaching, Lafayette's (1997) defines culture in a functional way. Big C includes recognizing and explaining geographical monuments, historical events, major institutions, and major artistic monuments. While little c includes recognizing and explaining everyday active cultural patterns such as eating, shopping, greeting people, etc.; every passive patterns such as social stratification marriage, work, etc.; and acting appropriately in common everyday situations. Another subdivision of culture is objective culture and subjective culture (Brislin, 1996; Bennett, 1998; Berger & Luckman, 1996; Triandis, 1994). Objective culture is defined as the formal culture in *Standards* plus Lafayette's little c. Subjective culture refers to invisible, less tangible aspects of culture such as world view, cultural values, assumptions, or style. While Hall regards subjective culture as language use, nonverbal behavior, style of communication and cognition, and cultural values (Bennett, 2003).

1.3 Intercultural Language Education

With the whole world globalization, migration, tourism, cultural export, etc., more and more language are recontextualized, which leads to linguistic and cultural complexity. Teaching a foreign language should keep pace with the development and changes of society and become multicultural. Under the theory of Hall (1959) that language is culture, and culture is communication, communication is also regarded as a dynamic process of transmitting information by means of language in cultural context. To cope with the globalization, the objective of learning a foreign language shifts its focus from being a native speaker to being an intercultural person. That is, developing speakers who are comfortable and capable of using the language in an intercultural context. The focus of language teaching also shifts from developing one's communicative competence to developing intercultural communicative competence.

Intercultural language teaching takes the need to communicate in the first place and try to teach culture in the way which develops intercultural communicative skills at the same time as developing language skills (Liddicoat & Anthony, 2004). Since language is structured with culture, and all messages that people communicate through language are communicated in a cultural context, so culture is the central part in language teaching. In one word, intercultural language teaching aims to cultivate speakers with intercultural communicative competence.

In the eyes of Bennett (1999), intercultural competence possesses three criteria: the competence to overcome ethnocentrism, appreciate other cultures, and perform appropriately in a multicultural context. However, it is an abstract definition of less value to foreign language. Byram (1997) thinks that the knowledge one possessed and applied in the intercultural communication includes the knowledge to recognize one's home culture and target culture, and the knowledge for individual and social communication. His comprehensive definition of an intercultural person is that someone who can use his linguistic competence and sociolinguistic awareness of the relationship between language and its context, in order to manage communication across cultural boundaries, to foresee misunderstandings caused by difference in values, meanings and beliefs, and to meet the affective and cognitive demands of engagement with otherness (Byram, 1995). Language learning, language interpretation, culture understanding, and culture experience are the four steps in his intercultural language teaching procedure (Byram, 1989).

While Finntini (1997) expresses the aim of intercultural language learning as the need for learning about cultures and comparing them as well as the need for intercultural exploration. His framework about intercultural competence is a detailed one, which covers a variety of characteristics/traits, three areas/domains, four dimensions, proficiency of a second language, and various levels of a longitudinal and developmental process (2001). An intercultural person should have the traits of patience, humor, open mind, curiosity tolerance and endurance towards what is vague/uncertain without making positive or negative judgments. Intercultural competence includes the ability to establish and maintain relationships, communicate with minimal loss/distortion, and collaborate in order to accomplish something of mutual interest/needs. The key point in intercultural competence is the four dimensions: knowledge, positive attitudes, skills and awareness. Generally, competence refers to attitude, cognition and behavior which relate to motivation, knowledge and skills in education domain. In this case, intercultural communicative competence can be synthesized as: Applying learned knowledge of culture and communicative skills into intercultural context, and positively face/accept the challenges.

Much same to Finntini, Risager (1998) also advocates culture comparison between home culture and target culture to overcome ethnocentrism, and he describes the objective of language teaching is to construct bridge between the two cultures. However, intercultural competence is more than learning about cultural knowledge and contrasting cultures. Kramsch (1993) hold an negative view against that cultural teaching is constructing a bridge between cultures, instead, she proposes that cultural teaching is dividing boundaries, since people with different identities view the same

culture differently. It is one's ability to create for oneself a comfortable "third place" (Kramsch, 1993, p.13) between one's linguaculture and target linguaculture through facing and solving cultural conflicts in cultural interaction/dialogue.

Apart from that, an intercultural person should also have the ability to recognize the domain of conflictions between the two cultures, explain conflicting behavior and belief, negotiate/solve the conflicts, and construct an effective confliction explaining system according to the speaker from specific cultural context (Zarate, 1997).

Kramsch (1998) holds the view that an intercultural person should have the ability to adopt appropriate form of language in certain social context rather than speak and write according to the academic norms in a social group. That is, one can flexibly communicate with more than one language in the related contexts without causing cultural misunderstandings. In intercultural language teaching, developing high level of language proficiency is far from enough, and a deep understanding of one's home culture and the ways in which cultures vary will be the long-lasting outcome of language learning (Crozet, 1999). Learners will be provided opportunities to reflect on their own language and culture, and compare them with other cultures to develop intercultural competence. Actually, intercultural competence needed for an effective language user should be: a) awareness that cultures are relative, and different people use language in different ways to achieve similar goals; b) knowing culture conventions in the language they are learning; c) having the strategies for learning more about culture as they communicate; d) having the capacity to reflect on their own linguistic behavior and the interlocutors'. With language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and language communicative competence as its basis, intercultural communicative competence will be developed (Liddicoat, 2004).

Bennett (2003) also stresses context in defining intercultural competence as "the ability to relate effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts". In language teaching context, there is a distinction between culture-specific and culture-general approaches. The former is to form the world view and specific behavior in a target culture. The latter puts emphasis on internalizing cognitive frameworks for cultural analysis, overcoming ethnocentrism, development appreciation and respect for one's own culture and cultural difference.

To sum up, intercultural language education is a process in which language serves as a means while culture knowledge as a goal, learners acquire the awareness of cultural difference through social interactions, and are finally able to conduct appropriate language performance and behavior to guarantee successful communication with people from other cultures.

1.4 Pedagogical Principles of Intercultural Language Teaching/Learning

When intercultural language learning is put into a classroom process, there are five broad principles (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Lohler, 2003) which will influence the curriculum design and planning, the choice of methodology, teaching materials, assessment tasks, etc..

a) Active construction: Learners needs to be equipped with the ability to notice differences in different cultures, reflect on the nature and impact of them, and develop personal solutions to the intercultural issues.

b) Making connections: Learners will be encouraged to associate what they have already known (culture, language, and knowledge) with what they are learning in the classroom, and make comparison and contrast.

c) Social interaction: Learners are encouraged to be actively involved in the interactions with the language they learned to communicate, experience difference, to share perceptions, to discuss and try out possible responses.

d) Reflection: This is the key part of the process of intercultural language learning. Learners will have the opportunities to pause to think whether they respond positively or negatively to the culture they are experiencing, and whether their communicative behaviors are appropriate.

5) Responsibility: Learners finally realize the outcome that they should be responsible for successful learning, and for developing the perspective to value other languages, cultures and people.

Under the guidance of the five principles, the procedural syllabus for ICLT is designed as content-based, taking language products, practices and perspectives as content, integrating language with culture, enhancing both the usage and the use of language, providing realistic and meaningful language input (Zhang, 2007), encouraging reflections in problem-solving tasks/experience (Chen, 2001).

A learner-centered classroom integrated with communicative language teaching methodology is recommended for ICLT. It is the teacher's job to create a platform in classroom to motivate learners actively involved in the designed classroom activities to practice their language and to experience differences in culture.

As for the content/materials, Liddicoat (2004) synthesizes the following five principles:

a) Cultural content contributes directly to developing communication or awareness of the value, attitudes, etc. of the group in study.

b) Cultural content is closely linked to language. This is of great importance since separating language from culture will lead to weaken the teaching/learning of any of the two.

c) Cultural content assists in developing/promoting the related learning strategies and skills of noticing, comparison and reflection.

d) Cultural content is treated as practices for learners to engage rather than facts to be memorized.

e) Cultural content allows learners to make connections between their home culture and the culture in study. (p.21)

2. INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN CHINA

2.1 Retrospection of Culture in Foreign Language Teaching

Foreign language teaching in China is a nationwide project, or an industry, from kindergarten to university, involving nearly all the citizens in learning a foreign language. In the 20th century, the focus of foreign language teaching has shifted from the rote-learning of linguistic knowledge (eg. vocabulary, grammar) to developing communicative competence. There undergoes several reforms in the history of Chinese foreign language teaching.

Before 1960s, language teaching was nominated by direction translation method. Culture knowledge was mainly about big C such as literature, great figures and events in history, religious, beliefs, and was irrelevant to the text and language. The function of culture knowledge at that time worked as background information to facilitate learners' interpretation in reading. After 1960s, audio-lingual method was popular and culture was regarded as one of the factors to promote vocabulary learning. In 1970-1980s, communicative competence, sociolinguistic competence and cultural competence were listed as the goal of language teaching. Culture knowledge of daily life (small c) was included in the teaching content for the purpose of avoiding misunderstandings or conflicts in communication due to culture differences. Culture at this period was regarded as static facts to recognize, and was additive to language teaching. In 1996, the Ministry of Education issued *college English teaching syllabus* putting learners' communicative competence in the first place and aiming to improve the language learning/ teaching efficiency. Text books for communicative approach were introduced to China, communicative language teaching approach was popular, and culture once again attracted people's attention, since culture in these authentic materials interrupt language learning. However, the difference in context between western countries and China, and the copied theory leads to an unsatisfactory outcome. The progress in language teaching was not as effective as it was expected.

2.2 Intercultural Language Teaching Context in College English

Unlike United States, Australia, and other countries with university students from all over the world, the students in Chinese universities and colleges are mainly Chinese, with few oversea students learning Chinese. English learning is compulsory in college, and students will fail to get their diploma and graduation certificate if they cannot pass the CET-4 exam testing listening, vocabulary, reading and writing. To some extent, college English teaching is teaching to test, aiming to assist students pass CET-4 exam.

The universal way of university English teaching for non-English majors is that the course book, compiled by Chinese scholars, is assigned by the authority of the university. Generally, thousands of students of different levels and hundreds of teachers use the same text book. The same curriculum syllabus is constituted at the beginning of each semester for all the students regardless of students' individual needs, purpose of learning English and their English proficiency, and the teaching process followed the schedule in lock-step. There are supervisors on behalf of university to inspect whether the teachers are following the schedule or not. If not, the teacher will probably be criticized or penalized. Neither the teacher nor students have the right to choose their learning materials for classroom learning and teaching. Besides, the emphases in classroom teaching are listening, reading and writing. Speaking is totally neglected in university English teaching since there is no time in classroom for a large class of students to practice speaking. The proficiency assessment at the end of each semester is always designed in the form of multiple choices for listening, reading, vocabulary, and the only production test for testing language competence is writing.

Under this circumstance, the Ministry of Education launched an innovation in Chinese college English language teaching in 2003. The key words for the reform center round "student autonomous learning" and "communicative competence". And pilot project was first launched in 180 key universities under the leadership of the Ministry of education. The results seem promising, so the number of university for extended pilot project is still increasing now, more and more universities and colleges are involved in the project. In 2004, the Ministry of Education issued *College English Curriculum Requirements (For Trial Implementation),* taking developing students' spoken, written skills, cultural quality, and ability to study independently as objectives. Knowledge and practical skills of English language, learning strategies, and intercultural communication are also required as the objectives (Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2004).

Since the publication of the *Requirements* and the launch of the extended pilot project, there is a nationwide reform in college English teaching: Teachers from English speaking countries are employed in the name of strengthening authenticity and intercultural education; communicative approach is adopted in the classroom teaching to promote interactions; text books for communicative learning are complied on the condition

that culture is the core; course software, videos for classroom activities and students' autonomous learning are also exploited; films clips and videos are available in the self-access language learning centers for culture input. Speaking and listening are strengthened in college English teaching syllabus. Millions of money was spent on building language laboratories and installing computers. Technologies are integrated into English classroom teaching for CALL（computer-assisted language learning） and WELL (web-enhanced language learning) to increase the access to intercultural knowledge. Chances for interactions between learner and computer, learner and learner are enhanced. Self-access language learning centers are available for part of students to select their learning materials according to their individual learning needs and offer students freedom in selecting materials for learning in their own time.

However, this is not the whole picture. Conditions and facilities in universities differ, software and hardware adopted for English teaching varied from one university to another. Besides, students in universities are not academic mature enough to decide their needs or clear about their goals of learning English. Furthermore, there exists misinterpretation in learner autonomy and intercultural competence among teachers. In view of intercultural language education, the reform is perfect/idealistic in theory and perfect for a small group of subjects, but rather difficult in practice and impractical for nationwide practice. To integrate culture into English teaching, problems from many aspects needs to be recognized and analyzed.

2.3 Challenges in Intercultural Language Education

For Chinese college English teaching, intercultural language education means having to overcome great difficulties and challenges in terms of government attitude, text books, teacher qualification, teaching approach and practice, students' motivation, testing, etc.:

2.3.1 Government Attitude
Culture develops with the advancement of society, economy, and politics. In order to avoid culture invasion, the attitude that Chinese government holds towards outside cultures is to reject the dross and assimilate the essence. It is the cautious attitude that hinders the development of intercultural education. According to culture relativity theory (Zhang, 2007), there is no difference between good and bad in culture and it is not suggested to make judgment on any culture/s. What is expected to learn are the differences between cultures. The attitude of dross and essence will prevent students to see the whole picture of a culture, and misleading students perceptions in culture learning instead of experiencing the entire culture. This is also the partial reason that intercultural teaching in China lags behind that in western countries.

2.3.2 Text Books
Under the scrutiny of politics, text books used are compiled by Chinese natives. The materials/content selected and compiled in the text books are semi-authentic, with necessary revisions to fit the needs in China, which reflects only part of the target culture. Besides, the exercises after each unit are designed for checking the mastery of linguistic knowledge, such as vocabulary, sentence structure, cloze test, translation, and writing. Last but not the least, culture knowledge is set in the cultural note section as background knowledge for students' memorization and recognition instead of practices, and is not systematically organized in the text books.

2.3.3 Teacher Qualification
Chinese college English teachers are qualified in language teaching, especially linguistic knowledge. But, the fact can not be denied that most of teachers, especially middle-aged, and so-called experienced teachers, have never been aboard, let alone, experience the target culture. Besides, these teachers have not received any culture training or education when they were learners, hence, they did not develop cultural awareness. What most teachers do in classroom is to follow the cultural notes in the textbook for students' to recognize cultural differences and facilitate reading/interpretation of the text, but, which is far from cultivating intercultural communicative competence.

2.3.4 Teaching Approach and Practice
If cognitive learning of culture can be realized by indirect means such as reading, seeing films or watching video clips, then, affective and behavioral learning should be conducted by "direct experiencing"(Zhang, 2007, p.154). The activities and interactions in classroom are of great importance to improve students' communicative competence and experiencing culture. But in the EFL context of CET-4 test-oriented, with the semi-authentic text books, designing classroom activities appropriate for culture experiencing and suitable for Chinese students is the greatest challenges for college teachers.

2.3.5 Students' Motivation
Students in colleges differ in their English proficiency. Those from highly developed eastern part of China with high language proficiency have more opportunities to communicative with native English speakers, while those from the remote underdeveloped western area with low proficiency have no access to target language and culture in communication. In addition, the great linguistic differences between Chinese and English, and the great cultural differences between the two languages, are the main factors influencing motivation. Students' motivations in learning result differently in their classroom performance, attitudes towards cultural conflicts, and cooperation with teachers. So, how to motivate students to actively participate in classroom interaction to compare and explore culture is also another challenge.

2.3.6 Testing

Before the innovation in college English teaching, CET 4&6 are designed for testing listening, vocabulary, reading, cloze, and writing. After the publication of *Requirement*, there is a trial reform in CET 4 exam in the form of online, focusing on testing reading, listening, and video program-based writing. Though, in recent years, translation was added to CET 4 &6, it is just focusing on translating some Chinese customs into English. What makes teachers and students frustrated is that the cultural information mentioned in the reform program is about customs from different parts of the world, instead of the target culture. Since traditional testing is a good way to monitor and supervise language teaching, it is a hard job for teachers to shift from bicultural to multicultural content.

Factors mentioned above are interrelated and interlocked with each other, one determining the other. In intercultural language education, the teachers' role and qualification are extremely important. For Chinese college teachers, the first thing needs immediate attention is their own cultural awareness and positive attitude towards English culture. The second thing is to have the competence to distinguish the cultural boundaries between so many English varieties, and to design appropriate classroom activities to enhance students' cognition, experiencing, and reflection.

CONCLUSION

The definitions of culture in the early years mainly center on different perspectives of culture. When culture is related to language teaching, the definition becomes more synthesized, and regarded as the fifth dimension of language, apart from the other four language skills. With the rapid development of society and globalization, as well as the increasing intercultural communication, language teaching focusing on linguistic knowledge and skills in language teaching is far from enough. Integrating culture into language teaching is an urgent need in China. The core of intercultural language education is to cultivate students' intercultural competence by inputting cultural knowledge for recognition, involving students in classroom interactions to compare and experience culture, and finally develop their cultural awareness by making cultural explorations. However, in the EFL context in China, achieving the goal of intercultural language teaching means great challenges to overcome, ranging from government policy to the test system. The most urgent challenge worth immediate attention is to launch a teacher training program to enhance cultural awareness and communicative teaching skills. To develop an effective intercultural competence testing system for such a large population of college students is an area worth further studying.

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