



Think Globally, Teach Locally: Empowering Chinese EFL Learners' Intercultural Competence with Morality Cultivation in the Culture-based Curriculum at Tertiary Education

Xinyao YU

School of Foreign Languages, Guangzhou Huashang College, Address: No.1 Huashang Road, Zengcheng District, Guangzhou, China

***Corresponding Author:** Xinyao YU, School of Foreign Languages, Guangzhou Huashang College, Address: No.1 Huashang Road, Zengcheng District, Guangzhou, China

Abstract: As the interplay between language and culture entails cultural elements in foreign language education, there is widespread recognition that tertiary-level English courses cannot be reduced to the direct instruction of linguistic skills like phonology, vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Despite the pedagogical shift of emphasis from linguistic competence to cultural uptake, most of educational practices and activities merely scratched the surface of intercultural education and solely focused on imparting of Western cultural knowledge in the Chinese EFL setting. In particular, little seems to happen in shaping students' cultural awareness and fostering their intercultural competence with exploring essential elements of character education and morality embedded in teaching materials. It is noteworthy that linguistic competence and mastery of target-language culture alone is insufficient to achieve the vital goal of cultivating internationalized talents for global citizenship education. By virtue of such pedagogical concerns, this paper specifies that it is counterproductive to separate implicit ideology underpinnings from the culture-centered instruction in the foreign language curricula. And it concludes by arguing for the necessity of re-conceptualizing Chinese-specific intercultural education and presenting a series of ideology-informed teaching practices that are grounded in CAK model. Based on the real-life pedagogical scenarios in the culture-based course for third-year English majors in Guangzhou Huashang College, the paper could also serve as a roadmap through which learners' language proficiency, intercultural competence and moral insights could be facilitated comprehensively.

Keywords: intercultural competence; moral cultivation; intercultural education; Global Citizenship; CAK

1. INTRODUCTION

The fast-paced and rapidly-changing 21st century has raised contested views about how to prepare EFL learners for a globalized and multicultural society and for building a better world. In response to the contemporary socio-political and economic complexities, intercultural education serves as a revolutionary and strategic approach to strengthening abilities and values related to intercultural competence, intercultural dialogue, and intercultural sensitivity individually and collectively (Gube). Through the vision of prospects and challenges in cross-cultural communication, intercultural education requires efforts to restore the humanity, inclusiveness and mutual respect that sustain pluralistic societies to thrive on the peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation among diverse cultures.

Within the percept of intercultural education, foreign language curricula in the Chinese EFL context necessitate the incorporation of fostering Learners' intercultural competence and moral integrity, which enables cultural teaching to be a spotlight and recent boost in pedagogical practices. Much has been made to prioritize culture-focused input and output over mechanical grammar and vocabulary drills, however, the current English language teaching mode is still far from sufficient achieving the expected outcome at tertiary level in China. Moreover, with an overemphasis on infiltration of Western culture, only a few lecturers and practitioners are fully aware of the vital role of local culture and traditional values in shaping one's cultural awareness and moral insights. For instance, after immersing in foreign language acquisition for several years, a great many EFL learners, overwhelmed by Western values, find it hard to convey Chinese culture or voice Chinese stories. The imbalance

between cultural uptake in native and target language makes it evident that the thorny issue of “cultural aphasia” is due to the neglect of Chinese culture and traditional values in the current English language teaching, which seriously hinders learners from developing their cultural identities and moral character. Apparently, the ongoing failure to cultivate intercultural competence of young learners, who are often academically advanced but culturally inept, would follow by this incongruity between pedagogical orientation and practices. Hence, to meet the world’s contemporary needs in talents cultivation, it might be a ripe time to rebuild a more integrated educational model and reaffirm the local identities of learners despite the continuing calls for epistemological plurality in intercultural education. In the same vein, as internalization does not equal to westernization, intercultural education entails Chinese EFL teaching and learning to modernize, not westernize.

Reflecting on prior pedagogical practices of teacher-text-centered learning with “otherized” Chinese culture in culture-endorsed courses, this paper provides an inquiry of intercultural education and sheds light on that language acquisition should be in line with the development of students’ moral well-being, intercultural competence and cognitive abilities. Scaffolded by CAK model, namely the framework for China’s intercultural competence teaching in foreign language education, the paper scrutinizes the ways that Chinese EFL curricula, such as the course in “the comparison between Chinese and Western culture” of Guangzhou Huashang College, unpack students’ roles in tertiary education to boost intercultural competence, strengthen moral fiber and restore cultural identity.

2. A COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE TEACHING BASED ON CAK MODEL

Introspecting on the incomplete paradigm shift in foreign language teaching, EFL teachers and practitioners have gradually aware that the implementation of intercultural education entails a more socially constructive scaffolding in China’s EFL context. To provide a holistic view of intercultural competence development, CAK model, which derives from Integrated Model for Chinese Students Intercultural Competence Development, IMCSICD, has played the proactive role in shaping an integrated framework of intercultural education (Zhang & Yao 35). The incorporation of general knowledge, cultural awareness and global mindedness is fully unveiled in the CAK model, in which “C” denotes communicative and cognitive skills, “A” signifies intercultural attitude and awareness, and “K” refers to knowledge of native and target language culture (Zhang 8-10).

Basically, the CAK model is a map of building a global citizenship from cultural heritage and legacy. By global citizenship and mindedness, it is defined as “global awareness, caring, embracing cultural diversity, promoting social justice and sustainability, and a sense of responsibility to act”, wedded to a humanitarian and inclusive mind that advocates heterogeneity and recognizes it as an enriching key factor to the world mosaic of cultures (Reysen et al. 29). More noteworthy, the manifestations of interrelationship between global citizenship and national cultural identity are also clarified in the model. To be more specific, it underlines that developing a healthy and appropriate attitude towards one’s national cultural identity and group is prerequisite to positive and reflective understanding towards other cultural, ethnic groups (Banks 300). Yet, current foreign education curricula are not conducive to a qualified global citizenship due to their neglect on national sentiments and cultural identification. Hence, the pedagogical practices with Chinese-specific CAK model, which sketches an unbiased conception of mapping national identity, cultural diversity and communicative competence, through three layers of cognition, awareness and knowledge, would best move young learners toward global citizenship in the Chinese context.

3. AN IDEOLOGY-LED PRAXIS IN THE EXPLORATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Given various interpretations and even misconceptions about “intercultural education” among EFL educators and teachers, scholars point out that cultural uptake in the foreign language curricula has been dominated by Western philosophical notions consciously or unconsciously (Goren & Yemini 172). Accordingly, classical philosophies and traditional values of the non-western world, particular the East, have long been appreciated and documented less (Choo 21). Also noteworthy, Dill (2013) poses the importance of moral values in light of intercultural education: “global consciousness” not only indicates a sense of being part of human community, and also a “moral conscience” to act for the

common good, which is ingrained in Chinese cultural values exemplified by Confucianism and China's proposal of a Global Community of Shared Future. In that aspect, aimed at cultivating talents with political integrity and intercultural competence, Chinese-specific cultural ideology and value orientation could not be disregarded within curricula setting and teaching methods.

As General Secretary Xi Jinping (2016) elucidated in the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work of Colleges and Universities, education cannot and will not do away with general moral education, which is regarded as the core link; it is required that exploration of ideological elements and moral values be carried out in pedagogical practices to realize "whole-process and all-round education"; regardless of subjects and forms, all kinds of courses should be designed with the orientation of moral education to achieve the intended effect of synthesis. Thus, driven by ideology-led pedagogical guidelines and principles, it is a must for all the tertiary-level curricula to dig into the educational values of all types of courses aiming at promoting students' ethical standard, political integrity, moral character and intercultural competence (Lu 130).

Through the prism of CAK model, the pedagogical approach to intercultural teaching offered here is chiefly based on the authentic scenarios and hands-on practices. To assist readers to acquire a clear-cut, tangible view on the implementation of intercultural teaching in China's EFL setting, the author chooses several cases and activities of the course in "the Comparison Between Chinese and Western Culture" as an exemplification, which she has undertaken for third-year English major students in Guangzhou Huashang College. Led by the guidelines of Chinese-specific intercultural education and intercultural competence development for global citizenship, this culture-based course has carried out via second classroom activities, multiple-perspective analysis of cultural terms and critical understanding of cultural manifestations in various cultural aspects. And the following pedagogical case is directed at facilitating learners' communicative and cognitive skills, an inclusive and open-minded attitude, cultural awareness and cultural knowledge with moral education in the EFL context.

3.1. Student-Centered Second Classroom as Carrier of Cultural Practices: the Exploration of Cognitive and Communicative Skills

Since intercultural education is apt to take great advantage from the combination of collaborative programs and case-based learning activities, the Intercultural Competence Competition and field studies for integrated pedagogical practices, targeted at competence development, are closely relevant to didactics designed for undergraduate students in China's EFL classroom.

Clearly, in an effort to cultivate successful intercultural communicators, it is essential to provide EFL learners with a thorough and systematic intercultural training of diverse cultures and heterogeneous values. Yet, most teachers have long enjoyed teacher-centered instructional contexts and immersed in utilizing some traditional in-class activities, such as various drills, video and quiz sessions, dialogue completion, grammar games and translation practices (Tuyen 37). Therefore, transition and reform might be needed to learning and teaching in a student-centered mode. In this regard, guided by social-cognitive theory, task-based activities and cooperative learning, which feature student-centeredness, could enable students to learn by constructing their own knowledge and skills in collaboration with their peers (Neo et al. 860).

China's Intercultural Competence Contest is such a student-centered platform to enhance learners' communicative, teamwork skills, and significantly boost their self-efficacy and sense of achievement. Over the past three years, the author and other lecturers from Guangzhou Huashang College have endeavored to motivate students to engage in the Intercultural Competence Contest, which aims to promote the international vision and cross-cultural ability in meeting foreign language talents demand. In November 2023, three students were selected as a representative team of Guangzhou Huashang College to participate in the Contest in Guangdong and won the first prize in the final. After the competition, all the team members reflected that it is what they learned from out-of-class experiences that really mattered a lot: their cross-cultural awareness, communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving ability have been significantly raised and fostered from a systematic intercultural training before the competition, a critical analysis based on authentic cases of intercultural encounters, to an impromptu speech centered on voicing China's stories.

More specifically, in the first round of the Contest, all the three members were required to cooperate and shoot a ten-minute video to analyze and solve intercultural conflicts based on real-life issues,

which is a really arduous task for them to integrate the intercultural theories and concepts into the weaving of plots and dialogues in the case. During the process of topic selection, script writing and dialogue practice, they have gradually established positive interdependence among team members and facilitated promotive interaction (Gillies 51). Finally, revolving around glocalization of BYD, China's Electric Vehicle leader, in German automobile market, they presented to judges an in-depth analysis of the intercultural communication and formulated a host of feasible solutions to drive Chinese brands to go abroad. Their great efforts, impressed performance and hard-won results make it evident that only by effective cooperation among team members, could they overcome the severe challenges and achieve desirable task performance successfully (Tu et al. 1). More importantly, intercultural collaboration that their presentation highlighted was also aligned with the target of the Contest: promoting the sense of "neighborhood" in intercultural practices and leaning, which echoes solidarity and collectivism in Chinese core values, which unveiled the members' comprehensive understanding of the essential spirit of Chinese.

Aside from strengthening cultural intelligence and communicative skills through competitions, another spotlight in second-classroom activities of this culture-based course is to motivate EFL learners to conduct a field study on Cantonese-style historical sites and cultural relics and accomplish the collaborative vlog project to introduce Chinese architectural art in English. In the course of "the comparison between Chinese and Western culture", students have worked together to fabricate a series of thought-provoking introductory videos regarding Chen Clan lineage, the arcade house, the ancestral temple in Foshan and other classical buildings. In this way, learners have fully immersed in the grandness and delicacy of Chinese traditional architecture and grasped the essence of craftsmanship and Chinese wisdom passed on from ancestors. Moreover, one group even probed into the unity between man and nature and other Chinese classical philosophical ideas embedded in the timber framework of Cantonese time-honored architecture. In their vlog project, they have proudly pointed out that in sharp contrast to stone, the load-bearing wooden architecture, as the mainstay in Chinese ancient buildings, symbolized the temperament and personality of Chinese people: gentleness, warmth, flexibility and firmness. Meanwhile, another group looked into this issue from a unique perspective of culture inheritance and preservation. As they stated, Chinese ancient architecture was such a breathtaking and momentous treasure of human civilization that there was an urgent need to restore and promote its cultural value. Also noteworthy, they added that everyone should also learn a lesson from Notre-Dame Fire, which was a fatal loss to all human kind, and shoulder obligations to protect and preserve all the achievements of human civilization. Needless to say, learners' active engagement in cultural practices and field studies on Chinese ancient civilization enable them to be not only more cultural confident, sensitive and intelligent, and also globally minded and inclusive in a multicultural milieu.

In essence, by means of multi-dimensional second-classroom educational activities, EFL learners will become more culturally confident and competent by developing their abilities and skills to critically compare and evaluate their native culture to other cultures, while applying their knowledge actively in both verbal and non-verbal communication.

3.2. "Tea" As Symbol of Cultural Integration: The Facilitation of Intercultural Awareness and Attitude

Apart from unleashing the underestimated value and potential of second classroom, EFL lecturers and practitioners also need to reexamine the mismatch between prescribed and actual use of selected teaching materials in EFL classrooms and eliminate the gap between students' learning outcome and teachers' pedagogical targets. Reflecting on prior teaching activities, EFL teachers have come to realize that one of the everlasting concerns of intercultural education is to redevelop and update teaching materials to meet the actual needs of their students for competence development. The task of determining the teaching content is therefore essential to intercultural teaching. And this pedagogical stage should be in tune with the targets and objectives of curriculum design in general but, particularly, with the specific educational needs of the students. In the similar vein, the teaching methods also need to be optimized through EFL lens. Formerly, when analyzing a series of cultural-loaded terms or concepts embedded in teaching materials, the EFL learners were no more than passive listeners or inefficient note-takers, which unveils learners' insufficiency in class participation and cultural awareness. In this respect, the author selected one of Wallace Stevens' tea poems, namely

“Tea”, as the material of in-class comparative analysis and Chinese and Western tea culture to make up for the lack of in-depth cases and classical materials in textbook.

After the teacher’s redesigning of pedagogy stages, the whole teaching procedure, centered on “tea culture”, could fall into three principal sections successively: the pre-class self-learning about the description of tea in “Tea”; the in-class analysis and discussion of cross-cultural symbols in the tea poem; and the post-class follow-up reflection on the investigation and assessment of students’ intercultural competence in the post-class period.

During the pre-class phase, the teacher generally distributed an open-ended online survey about English major students’ existing knowledge and conception of the history of tea in terms of cultural exchange, which required every student to submit answers and understandings before class. Then, relying on the feedback and results, she would readjust her own pedagogy to closer meet the actual learning needs of students in the upcoming in-class activities. In this way, students were motivated to connect their knowledge and culture acquisition with what they have learnt beyond the classroom. Furthermore, the feedback of pre-class survey revealed that most students were ambiguous about deeper meaning of Stevens’ elaboration on tea leaves despite their access to online resources to look into the poem, which discloses their inadequate sensitivity in cultural symbols. Strikingly, it is also interesting to note that one of the students, with unfettered thoughts, linked Stevens’ affinity with tea to her own preference for tea, which epitomizes tea as a bridge to cross cultural divides among different cultures. By virtue of her feedback, it is apparent that the student successfully achieved a desirable outcome from her effective self-learning. And then, grounded in heuristic activities of self-learning, the teacher proceeded to strengthen her students’ cross-cultural awareness and triggered their interests in undiscovered aspects of the two poems about tea in a deeper level.

During group discussion, students further expounded on Stevens’ depiction of tea mainly at the textual level: the poet employed abundant images to portray the beauty of tea leaves from various aspects. One student mentioned that in the first four lines, Stevens captured the exterior characteristics of tea leaves both from the lens of static and dynamic aspect: with regard to refined tea before tea-making, he imaginatively compared the curling tea leaf to “the elephant’s-ear” “shriveled in frost” (“Tea” 112); Meanwhile, the hovering and dancing tea leaves, as Stevens envisioned, were paralleled to the running rats. Based on detailed analysis above, students came to draw a conclusion that through the lens of imagination, Stevens built a bridge between reality and imagination by relating the appearance of tea leaves to the images of more familiar animals. Another student also analyzed that Stevens’ vivid depiction of tea leaves served to unfold fascination and ecstasy popping up in mind as he caught glimpse of tea leaves at the first time. During the process of textual analysis, most students did well in clarifying the imagery and uncovering Stevens’ emotion hidden in the poems.

However, the contextual analysis of Steven’s poetic representation about tea is largely neglected by students, which indicated their inadequate understanding of diverse cultural contexts. Guided by the teacher’s appropriate use of cueing, prompting and questioning, students gradually realized that although “tea” is literally mentioned only in the title of the poem, each line carried loads of information about tea. Rekindled by teacher’s instruction, one student, who was versed in Chinese classical poetry, found that this kind of poetic technique actually referred to “Little Plum Blossom in Hill of Garden” by Lin Bu, a poet in Song Dynasty. Likewise, “little plum blossom” had not been directly mentioned for the second time throughout the poem, but it still earned the reputation as the masterpiece among plum-chanting poems. Accordingly, teacher elucidated that it was representative of “the refinement of Sung society” that Stevens admired and inherited, which provoked students to further clarify the interrelationship between Stevens and Chinese culture (Letters 221). Hence, followed by teacher’s prompting, one student commented given that tea was originated in China, Stevens, in fact, expressed his eagerness and fascination about the oriental culture by rendering the impressive portrayal of leaves-taking in his poem “Tea” through a similar literary tactic.

In attempt to further expound on Stevens’ engagement in Chinese traditional culture, the teacher presented Stevens’ letters to dig out his enthusiasm for Chinese cultural elements. In a letter dated 1909, Stevens recollected his memorable encounter with a Chinese painting about Arhats and he highly appreciated the intoxicating sense of beauty embodied in the oriental artwork (Letters 137).

Later, Stevens even purchased a few pretty artworks from Beijing after innumerable hardships (Letters 229-31). As his letter dated 18 March 1909 demonstrated, overwhelmed by the charm of Chinese culture, Stevens spent the whole week “reading about the Chinese feeling about landscape” in New York’s Astor Library (Letters 137). Given a picture of Stevens’ immersion in Chinese culture from the first-hand resources above, some students speculated that “tea” might not only enrich Stevens’ literary creation, and also reshape his value orientation more or less. Clearly, the exotic “Java” in the last line justified students’ assumption. In fact, “Java” was in the possession of the Dutch East Indies at that time: it was closely related to large-scale tea production and transportation in the 19th century. Rather than a symbol of underdevelopment or colonialism, Stevens deemed it as a paradise free from human activities, a utopian society to realize Daoist inactivity and an ideal wonderland which enriched his poetic life by bringing tea to the Western world.

Through the search for the socio-historical context concerning Stevens’ poetic creation of tea culture, students became fully aware that the poet’s fondness for Chinese culture was not merely revealed in his obsession with tea and tea culture, and also manifested in his crave for peacefulness and tranquility embedded in Chinese classical philosophy. Later, after active engagement in group discussion and critical analysis at a contextual level, deeply impressed by Stevens’ affinity with tea, students arrived at a conclusion that tea, served as a cross-cultural and communicative tool, largely pushed collision and integration of different cultures. With the implementation of the case-based intercultural learning model, students were eager to explicate culture-specific terms and concepts in authentic situations and learned to wield a critical contextual analysis of selected culture-related materials, which enables them to acquire a strengthened sense of cultural confidence, cross-cultural awareness, sensitivity and competence.

3.3. “Silk” as Signifier of Cultural Knowledge: The Accumulation of Knowledge of Self and Others

By the similar token, another typical example of intercultural teaching is centered on the comparison between Chinese and Western costume, especially on the history of silk. Before an in-depth analysis of cultural connotations of silk, students were ready to gather relevant contextual information related to case study. Moreover, they discovered that with epoch-making significance, the silk road in the ancient times has evolved into the Belt and Road initiative in the contemporary era, which spurs cross-cultural exchange and reciprocal trade throughout the world. To further nurture students’ cultural empathy, the teacher also elicited students’ ideas and motivated them to share their own experiences oriented by the Belt and Road initiative. Some conveyed their own understanding of cultural exchange in heated free discussions and told stories of Guangzhou proudly, one of the key ports in the Maritime Silk Road. Relying on their own narratives, students interpreted the strategic significance of the Belt and Road initiative as the milestone and platform to carry out win-win economic cooperation, and jointly uphold equality and justice in international affairs. More specifically, one of them pointed out the great initiative nurtured the spirit of friendship among different countries, which features mutual respect, equality and mutual learning.

Admittedly, students’ vivid portrayal of history of the Silk Road, which echoed harmony in diversity, rekindled them to acquire a deeper sense of cultural solidarity and inclusiveness. Yet, the cultural value of silk was still underestimated by students, most of whom acknowledged it as a cultural metaphor and universal sign in the globalized era and did not pay due attention to its historical significance. In essence, China was the first to make silk in weaving clothes and later benefited the whole world for centuries. Apart from Chinese wisdom and craftsmanship implied in it, Chinese traditional costume, represented by Hanfu, serves as a further manifestation of the core tenet in Chinese classical philosophical notions: the unity between man and nature. After students’ meticulous observation, they found that its upper part was woven with four textile segments equivalent to the four seasons, while the lower garment is divided into twelve panels of fabric corresponding to the various months of the year. Particularly, the details of Hanfu like “long-wide sleeves” and the “crossed-collar with right lapel” mirrored the modesty and inclusiveness of the ancient Chinese civilization, which reminds modern people of the important pages in the past. As students elaborated, it was never an easy task to interpret profoundness of traditional Chinese outfit in a few words. Once again, marveled at the inherent charm of Chinese culture, students took a deep dive into culture and traditions, which

deepens their understanding of Chinese cultural knowledge and consolidates their own cultural identities.

Throughout the teacher's pedagogical endeavors, students, who were engrossed in authentic materials and real-life issues, could gain cultural empathy and acquire knowledge more easily, which laid a solid foundation for intercultural education and intercultural competence development. After the overall case-based and in-class activities, students were assigned to hand in a report on "the Silk Road in the past and at the present" or a feedback about the course with an assessment of their in-class performances via self-examination and peer evaluation. In doing so, teacher could have a more direct access to drawing upon students' own funds of knowledge and forming into the enhancement of competence to authentic intercultural discourse in the future.

4. CONCLUSION

Through the prism of Chinese-specific CAK model combined with the guidelines of intercultural education for Chinese EFL learners at tertiary level, this paper throws light upon a series of effective pedagogical practices in a culture-based course in an attempt to strengthen English major students' cultural competence and consolidate their cultural identity, the foundation of the global citizenship.

Targeted at facilitating EFL learners' intercultural competence and cultural identification, this paper also expounds on the ways to implement second-classroom activities and polish teaching materials and cases notably versatile for teaching purposes in China's foreign language education. Within an integrated cognitive framework utilizing extracurricular competitions, out-of-class field studies and authentic culture-centered materials, the learners' self-efficacy and cultural awareness have been greatly fostered and enhanced amid the pedagogical practice.

In light of CAK model, a close examination of intercultural issues and cases embodies both a much inclusive and more nuanced lens encompassing cultural diversity and decentralization of cultural imperialism. With the implementation of diverse cognitive strategies and multiple channels, students have been fully aware that culture is not "taught" or "monopolized", but "acquired" and "diversified". As the indispensable part of intercultural education, due attention should be given to scrutinize Chinese traditional values and classical philosophical notions, which embeds a global-minded and intercultural outlook to guide students in the enhancement of global citizenship in EFL teaching. In particular, Chinese classical culture, which seems obsolete and outdated, functions as the root of their cultural identity to shape who they are. More noteworthy, with the skillful manipulation of efficient pedagogical strategies, teacher's encouragement of students' cultural engagement in class not only provides them opportunities to connect with linguistic proficiency and cultural competence development, and also enlightens them to take the initiative in inheriting and promoting Chinese traditional culture, which further strengthens students' cultural confidence and consolidates their cultural identity.

In a nutshell, it is further proposed that teacher's redesigning pedagogy driven by CAK model is appropriate and effective to students. In essence, the model, like a patchwork, conduces to the accomplishment of intercultural education for multi-layered goals stitched together while the synergy between cognition, awareness and knowledge unpacks a huge potential of all learners to build intercultural competence for all-round development in internationalized talents cultivation for global citizenship.

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