

OBSERVATION ON HISTORY TEACHING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: THE "CHINESE HISTORY COMMON KNOWLEDGE" COURSE OF THE ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF PHNOM PENH IN CAMBODIA AS AN EXAMPLE

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Abstract: This paper refers to the author's experience in teaching Chinese history knowledge during her teaching at Royal University of Phnom Penh in Cambodia, and attempts to study overseas Chinese history courses from the perspective of intercultural communication. This paper analyzes and compares the similarities and differences between Chinese and Cambodian history classrooms, and thinks that the suitable teaching methods for second language history classrooms are the "block" teaching method and the task method. This article also analyzes the problems that are likely to occur in the second language history class and attempts to give solutions.

Keywords: intercultural communication, common knowledge of Chinese history, the Belt and Road

1 Research Status of History Course Teaching

At present, history teaching curriculum is mostly concentrated on the history curriculum teaching in primary and secondary schools in China. History curriculum teaching is receiving more and more attention in the basic education stage of junior high school and high school, but analyses of the history of Chinese as a second language classroom teaching are rare. Teaching Chinese as a second language should focus on the psychology and attitude of intercultural communication, learning motivation, style and strategy of Chinese learners in classroom communication. However, the curriculum of the *Common knowledge about Chinese history* curriculum has higher requirements

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for Chinese learners, so the research on teaching '*Common knowledge about Chinese history*' under the perspective of intercultural communication is relatively scarce. If you want to learn Chinese well, you need to understand Chinese historical and cultural common sense behind Chinese language. Therefore, it is very pertinent to study what '*Common knowledge about Chinese history*' has to offer under the perspective of intercultural communication, which is also the focus of this paper.

2. Introduction to the history course offered by Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia

2.1. Introduction to the Chinese Department of Royal University of Phnom Penh

The Royal University of Phnom Penh is a public university in Cambodia which provides high academic qualification. It is composed of the Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Academy of Science and the institute of foreign languages, which is a household name in Cambodia. The Chinese Department is part of the institute of foreign languages of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (IFL). It is a very popular major in the institute of Foreign Languages at the Royal University of Phnom Penh.

It is also the first Chinese undergraduate education institution in the history of Cambodia. The domestic partner institution of the Chinese Department of Royal University of Phnom Penh is Dali University. The Chinese Department has existed since 2010. It has produced five Chinese graduates, who have played an important role in the friendly relations and economic and cultural exchanges between China and Cambodia. The Chinese grade setting is the same as the domestic undergraduate education, and is also four years. There are three classes in each grade: morning class, noon class and evening class. It shows that Cambodia's education system is different from that of China. Cambodia's education is based on a half-day system. The content of the three classes was similar except that they were divided into three periods according to the Cambodian education system. The Department of Chinese Studies offers 38 courses, of which Common Knowledge of Chinese History is one..

2.2 Introduction to the '*Common knowledge about Chinese history*' Course in the Chinese Department of Royal University of Phnom Penh

The textbook of Chinese history and cultural common knowledge selected by the Chinese Department of the Royal University of Phnom Penh is '*Common knowledge about Chinese history*' (Chinese-English), which was published

by the Higher Education Press, the Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs of the State Council and the Office of the National Chinese International Promotion Leading Group for the promotion of Chinese language international. It is divided into three parts: ancient Chinese history, modern Chinese history and modern China. This book systematically introduces the origin, development of the Chinese civilization – from antiquity (1.7 million years ago) to the year 2001, as well as major events and outstanding figures emerging in the development process of Chinese history. The course is set in the first semester of the junior year, and it is taught for two classes a week.

The teaching method I adopted is to explain the historical and cultural common knowledge of China in a timeline manner, and introduce the most important events of each historical period according to the chronological order of Chinese history, so that the students can remember them long-term.

3 Comparison between Chinese and Cambodian history classroom

3.1 Traditional History Classroom in Cambodia

The traditional historical classroom model in Cambodia is where teachers stand on the podium and teach the students face to face in the classroom.

At the Foreign Languages School at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, they take Cambodian history for credit before they can learn a second language. Therefore, my Chinese students will study Cambodian history. According to the feedback from the students, they will recite the lesson after the teacher teaches. The questions in the exam are mainly short-answer questions, which is very close to the traditional Chinese history classroom. Since the teachers of Cambodian history are local teachers, the language used is taught in their own mother tongue, so the students don't have a clear opinion on the course. It is related to the traditional teaching method of Cambodia, mainly teachers' teaching style, most of Cambodian students' introvert character and their traditional teaching mode.

3.2 Chinese History Classroom in the Perspective of Intercultural Communication

At the Royal University of Phnom Penh in Cambodia I taught '*Common knowledge about Chinese history*' for two semesters in six classes. In the history lesson, based on the psychology and attitude-related knowledge of intercultural communication, the first year I mainly adopted a teaching method that is more suitable for the character of Cambodian students—the blackboard writing

way to teach, the students can understand it. However, there is some room for improvement in their learning of Chinese; they are struggling with some professional terms in the textbooks. In the classroom, I require some knowledge of language skills to let students understand more Chinese history, and also consider the teacher-student relationship in the conditions of intercultural communication. I also explain when the experience is lacking. However, as a Chinese volunteer teacher, I make it my objective to do a good job of classroom management in a timely manner, clarify the course objectives, and let the students understand the history and culture of China, rather than teach just vocabulary. Later, I adjusted the teaching method and adopted the "language teaching", which not only eased the pressure on the students to learn Chinese historical knowledge, but also made students prefer the *Common knowledge about Chinese history* class.

When I taught history lessons again during the second year, I had already understood the character and motivation of Cambodian students. Because our Chinese Department of the Royal University of Phnom Penh is an academic institution, their motivation for learning is not only integration motivation, but also instrumental motivation, which is to obtain a degree. Moreover, after I had a semester-long experience in the history class teaching under the cross-cultural perspective, the feedback was very good. According to the principle of "combination of cognitive learning and experiential learning" in cross-cultural communication, in order to better my teaching, I adjusted my teaching model, adopted the way of the combination of task-based teaching method. Students can participate in their own classrooms and I gave them assignments, to their own interpretation of the history of Chinese common knowledge. I encouraged students to share their group tasks with each other and increased their interest in learning. At the same time, I assisted the timeline to help students understand China better. I also recommended some films and television dramas about Chinese history. The teaching effect was remarkable.

4 Interpretation of the Silk Road under the Intercultural Perspective

4.1 Explanation of the Silk Road

The introduction to the Silk Road in the '*Common knowledge about Chinese history*' textbook, titled "Zhang Qian's departure to the Western Regions", is on pages 52-53. I use a time, place, and introduction of the characters to provide students with historical knowledge. At the same time, there are pictures of Zhang Qian's departure for the Western Region and Silk Road. The information section also introduces the maritime Silk Road.

When I was teaching, I first drew the timeline of ancient Chinese history on the blackboard, reviewed the content of the previous lesson and introduced it naturally during the review. It's like telling a story. While drawing the timeline on the blackboard, I said to the students: "We came to the Han dynasty after learning about Xiang Yu, Liu Bang and the contention for hegemony between the Chu and Han dynasties. We got to know the great Emperor Han Wu, who was famous in Chinese history. But today our hero is another outstanding figure in the history of the Han dynasty."

Through the analysis of the textbooks, the students were also asked to find out the number of Zhang Qian's missions to the Western Region. At the same time, I wrote the title "Zhang Qian's departure for the Western Region" on the blackboard, and then the key time and place were written: "The Silk Road starts from Chang An in the east, goes west to the east coast of the Mediterranean, and turns to the Roman Empire." In addition, I let the students find out what commodities were exchanged. The students' enthusiasm was very high.

4.2 The history classroom under the Belt and Road

The Belt and Road refers to "China borrows the historical symbol of the ancient Silk Road, holds high the banner of peaceful development, actively develops economic partnerships with countries along the route, and jointly creates a community of interests, a community of destiny and a community of responsibility for political mutual trust, economic integration and cultural inclusion". In the Common Knowledge about Chinese History class, the Silk Road was mentioned. Students are very interested in it, because China's "The Belt, The Road" policy has given more Cambodian people, especially students, a lot of preferential treatment. So while studying this lesson, the students wanted to know the Silk Road in Chinese history and the connection to the current Silk Road. After learning about the Silk Road, students began to think about the relationship between the Silk Road and their Cambodian origins and connections. Finally, under my guidance, in addition to Zhang Qian's departure for the Western Region that we studied, the Western Region is the Silk Road, which is known as the Silk Road on the Land. And in the Han Dynasty, we also had a maritime Silk Road. The "Belt and Road" between China and Cambodia is more of a Maritime Silk Road.

4.3 Cambodia and the Maritime Silk Road

During the Three Kingdoms period, Sun Quan of Soochow sent his envoys to Funan—the historical “Cambodia”. Kang Tai and Zhu Ying visited Funan by sea, and the two envoys were the pioneers of China’s first South China Sea. The messengers of Funan usually went to China by sea, the shipbuilding and navigation industries in Funan were highly developed. The people of Funan were devoted to the maritime trade, so their sea-going production technology was excellent, and they had been in a leading position in East Asia and South Asia at that time. This is the earliest witness to the Maritime Silk Road between China and Cambodia.

During the Yuan Dynasty, Zhou Daguan visited the Zhenla (Cambodia) with the mission of the Yuan Dynasty government. It was a major event in the maritime traffic between China and Cambodia. “The Customs of Cambodia” records the whole route from Wenzhou to Zhenla. It is an important document about the Sino-Cambodian maritime traffic, which developed the Silk Road of China and Cambodia to a certain extent.

5 Problems and Solutions *in Common Knowledge about Chinese History Lessons in Cross-Cultural Vision*

5.1 Students regard history lesson as a comprehensive lesson and have fears

In the course of *Common Knowledge about Chinese History*, students usually take notes in their notebooks. They will search for the meaning of the text word by word, putting too much emphasis on language learning and neglecting the study of historical facts. Under such circumstances, the burden of study was increased, students were always uncertain. During the class, the students struggle with the words and hope that the teacher can disperse their confusion. Moreover, the teacher's language should enable students to adapt the content of the cultural teaching to the language level of the students when studying the course content. The teachers should be clear about the learning objectives of the course when they attend the first class, and they should not always explain the meaning of the text due to the frustration of students' learning psychology during cross-cultural communication. This is the same as the Chinese teacher of the voice class, which emphasizes Chinese characters. On the contrary, teachers can adopt the "language chunks" teaching method to alleviate the problem. In daily questions, ask questions about historical events, and students can answer clearly..

5.2 Lack of understand of the content of the text due to different cultural background

From the perspective of intercultural communication, this is indeed one of the foreseeable issues. Because the culture is different, the differences will exist. For example, when talking about the lesson of Xiang Yu and Liu Bang, students don't understand why Liu Bang is going to the banquet. Why do we praise Xiang Yu and Liu Bang was also the emperor in Chinese history. At this time, teachers should actively encourage the students to look at the problem from different angles. As our President Xi Jinping said, we must tell the Chinese story well. At the same time, we should bear in mind the famous Samuel-Wolf hypothesis: "Language not only expresses and reflects thoughts, but also shapes people's thoughts and world views", so we can do well on the basis of understanding the ideas of Cambodian natives. A Chinese teacher's job is to teach Chinese well. After they learn Chinese well, the highest level of language learning is to think about problems with the target language. This is a long-term solution to the problem.

5.3 Special Teaching Objects – Monks. Explaining Chinese historical knowledge to Cambodian students in the context of intercultural communication

There is a special teaching object for cross-cultural communication – Cambodian monks. Cambodia is a Buddhist country, and the status of monks is sacred and noble in the hearts of Cambodians. Cambodian monks do not need to pay tuition fees at school, which fully reflects the respect of the Cambodian kingdom for the monks. When teaching history, the courses *Xuanzang's journey to the West* and *Jianzhen's journey to the East* will be related to Buddhist culture. At this time, teachers should pay special attention to the language in class, so as not to cause unnecessary cultural conflicts.

Since there are differences between Chinese Buddhism and the Buddhist institution in Cambodia, teachers should not make comparisons in class, not to mention asking Cambodian monks and students about the differences between Buddhist China and Cambodia in class. Instead, they should explain the differences according to the content of the course. If you don't have extended knowledge of Buddhism, you are not recommended to extend the content of these two lessons too much.

6. Summary

The *Common Knowledge about Chinese History* curriculum enables students to understand China's ancient history and modern history, as well as modern

China. It has played a role in encouraging the friendly China-Cambodia relations. It is helpful for teachers to "teach" and for students to "learn" by looking at and studying Chinese history knowledge classes from the perspective of cross-cultural communication. Intercultural communication is closely related to Chinese international education. Chinese teachers should not only have the ability to communicate across cultures, but also to cultivate the intercultural communication ability of Chinese learners. Respect each other's culture and take a good course in Chinese history.

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