A Study on the Course Design of the Chinese Intangible Heritage for College English Learners

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Abstract: Although many researches nowadays are focusing on the cross-cultural communication issue, they mostly fail to satisfy the learners' needs of Chinese culture learning. To solve this, we carry out a questionnaire, based on the sample of 701 learners of college English with different grades, genders and majors, to analyze the learners' needs for the course of Chinese intangible cultural heritage. Through the course design, we try to clarify the teaching objectives, materials, methods, evaluations and environments. All these efforts will definitely help learners of college English to study the Chinese culture, and furthermore, set an example to the design of others culture-oriented courses for college English learners.

Keywords: course design; needs analysis; culture course; intangible cultural heritage

1. Introduction

Foreign language teaching emphasizes the cultural knowledge teaching for long. But Chinese culture teaching is much ignored in college English teaching, due to facts like the lessening of the course periods, difficulties of cultural coursebook designing, teachers' ability to teaching Chinese culture, etc. So the college students mostly are short of the ability to do the cross-cultural communication.(Zhou&Chen, 2015; Yuan, et al, 2021; Chang, 2021) The newly-issued "Guidance of College English Teaching" emphasizes the new curriculum system should take the cross-cultural ability in account, because learning English is vital to the country development, and English learning must take the responsibility to spread our Chinese culture consciously(Wang, 2012; Lv&Yu, 2021).

Then how do the teachers help college students transmit Chinese culture by English to improve their cross-cultural communication ability? Based on Chinese intangible cultural heritage, our study firstly analyzes the students' need of the culture-oriented course, and then tries to designing the framework of this course, by the methods of questionnaires and interviews.

2. Literature Review

In order to design the framework of the cultural course, we need to clarify several issues.

First, why intangible cultural heritage should be focused in the designing? It's because intangible heritage is the treasure among a civilization. Chinese intangible heritage such as Nanyin, Qun Opera, paper-cutting, has been influencing Chinese people and society for hundreds of years. If we can include several types of this culture into our English course, students can definitely learn much about the Chinese culture, and more importantly they can further improve the ability and confidence in cross-cultural communication.

Secondly, how do we design a culture-related course? Several classic course designing strategies can be adopted. Yalden(2008) put forward a course design strategy through 7 steps: needs analysis, target description, syllabus pattern choosing, content choosing, teaching method design, environment setting, evaluaion. Richards (1990) and Brown(2001) adopt the strategies like Yalden's by simplifying it. For they both omit the step of "syllabus pattern choosing". nowadays, the course design strategies are more dynamic and multiplying. Let's take the mode of Nation&Macalister (Hao&Wang, 2020). This mode puts the teaching target, content, method, and evaluation in the inner circle, and lays the teaching principles, environment and needs analysis in the outer circle.

Whatever course design strategies are adopted in the culture-oriented course, the students' needs

analysis should always placed in the beginning of a course design. So far the theories of needs analysis have been through several stages, form target situation analysis, current situation analysis, Duedley-Evans & St John mode and Hutchinson & Waters Mode(Chen, 2010; Shi&Cheng, 2019). Among them, the mode of Hutchinson&Waters is much more flexible and comprehensive. It divides needs into two major parts, that is, target needs (one's learning needs in the future, one's weaknesses at present, one's learning desire) and clearing needs(to satisfy the precious target needs, several elements should be involved in learning, such as teaching content, method, time&place, etc). This mode derives from the ESP teaching, but is also suitable in our culture course design (Cheng, 2002).

So in this study, we first do a questionnaire about the students' needs of the culture course under the theory of Huichinson&Waters, and then design a course framework based on Chinese intangible cultural heritage.

3. Study Design

3.1 Questions

Under precious literature review, two questions are listed as follows:

1) What do college students need from a culture-oriented course?

2) Under the needs analysis of Q1, how is a culture-oriented course designed, based on Chinese intangible heritage?

3.2 Objects

The study chooses college students of the first and second years as the samples. Among them, 405 first-year students and 296 second-year; 274 arts students, 232 science&engineering, 195 other majors; 210 male students and 491 female. The objects are chosen by considering elements like grade, major and gender, with a purpose to fully strengthen the representativeness.

3.3 Data collection

The study adopts a questionnaire and interviews to collect the data.

The need-analysis questionnaire is designed based on Hutchinson&Waters model and previously mentioned course design strategies. It decides the students' needs into 5 dimensions: target, content, method, evaluation and environment. Under these five dimensions, 18 questions items are set in two forms, single and multiple choice. For example, in the "target" dimension, a item is set as "(multiple choice) Through the intangible-cultural-heritage course, I expect to____. A. learn culture-oriented expressions B. learn cultural knowledge C. talk about the culture in cross-cultural communication D. cultivate a correct attitude towards Chinese and foreign cultures ".

In order to strengthen the objectivity of the questionnaire, 40 students are chosen randomly from the samples to do a written interview with several concerned questions to answer. The interview requires the students to to further clarify their ideas and confusions in the precious questionnaire.

After the questionnaire and interviews, all the data are collected and typed into the data base for further analysis.

4. Results and Discussion of the Needs Analysis

To answer the question 1 --- "What do college students need from a culture-oriented course?", 5 tables under the 5 dimensions of needs are presented below. In these tables, every questionnaire item and selection percentage are listed, with a total number of 701 samples.

1) Target dimension

As table 1 shows, item 1 is concerned with students' desire for the course. 44 choose "partially disapproved" and "totally disapproved", only accounting for 6% of the total samples. So most samples welcome the culture-oriented course, with a strong desire to learn it. According to Liu&Hu's research (2021), "The mean of the participants' needs for eastern civilization is higher than the corresponding western civilization."

Table 1. Question items and results in target dimension

Question Items Items	Choice & Results				
1. The intangible cultural heritage needs to be involved into the college English teaching.	A totally approved	B partially approved	C not sure	D partially disapproved	E totally disapproved
	30%	40%	24%	4%	2%
2. Through the intangible cultural heritage course, I expect to ____.	A learn culture-oriented expressions	B learn cultural knowledge	C. talk about the culture in cross-cultural communication	D cultivate a correct attitude toward Chinese/foreign cultures	
	3. 77%	4. 86%	5. 60%	6. 68%	
3. Have you ever studied a course or read a book related to cultural heritage?	A Have		B Haven't		
	6%		94%		

Item 2 is a multiple choice, concerned with students' future needs from the course. More than 50% of the total number choose every option. Especially for option A, up to 77% choose it, which indicates that students not only want to improve their cross-cultural ability in the aspects of cultural knowledge, attitude and skill, but also they take the culture-oriented vocabulary into account.

Item3 is concerned with students' weaknesses at present. Obviously, about 94% samples haven't studied or read anything about this culture, which open the door to this course design. But at the same time, it indicates that there seems to be a big gap between students' future needs and their current weaknesses, so the target of the cultural course shouldn't be set too highly.

From the written interview, students make comments like "we need to learn the cultural knowledge more systematically ", "during the cross-cultural communication, we find it very interesting to talk about cultural issues", "teachers should provide mire chances for us to talk about culture".

2) Content dimension

Table 2. Question items and results in content dimension

Question Items	Choice & Results				
4. A coursebook is needed in the in the course.	A totally approved	B partially approved	C not sure	D partially disapproved	E totally disapproved
	16%	32%	35%	14%	3%
5. (multiple choice)What kind of information do you expect from the coursebook?	A cultural knowledge in words		B related pictures		C. related video
	60%		56%		64%
6. What style of language should be adopted in the coursebook?	A written style		B spoken style		
	34%		66%		
7. What range of vocabulary should be used in the coursebook?	A more than 5500 words	B 5500 words	C. 4500 words		D less than 4500 words
	5%	30%	53%		12%

As table2 shows, item 4 and 5 are concerned with the choosing of content. In item 4, 118 choose "partially disapproved" and "totally disapproved", just accounting for 17% of the total number. Although it means most students favour a specific culture coursebook, only 16% "totally approved " it. So whether a coursebook should definitely be used is up to students' individual preference. Maybe a digital form of coursebook can be as option as well, which may lower the cost of a printed course. Item 5 is a multiple choice. Similar to item 2, more than 50% choose every option. Students want to study the culture knowledge in the forms of words, pictures and videos altogether, which makes the coursebook much more interesting and comprehensive.

Item 6 and 7 are concerned with the organizing of content, especially in language. In item 6, 66% favour the spoken style of language, while in item 7, 83% favour a range of 4500~5500 words used in the course. It indicates that students won't take the culture course as a reading lesson, and they focus much more on the content of the course instead of vocabulary input.

From the interview, students make comments like "the coursebook doesn't necessarily need to be printed. The content may also be uploaded online for further use", "the coursebook should contain more media sources like pictures or video. A book with only the words may not be attractive anymore", etc.

3) Method dimension

Table3. Question items and results in method dimension

Question Items	Choice & Results			
8. What methods are more suitable in the culture course on the teacher's part?	A mainly deliver knowledge, supplemented with interactions		B mainly interact, supplemented by knowledge deliver	
	55%		45%	
9. In knowledge delivering, what language should the teacher use?	A in English only	B in English, supplemented by Chinese	C in both English and Chinese	D in Chinese, supplemented by English
	4%	52%	35%	9%
10. In interactions, what activities do you prefer?	A questions	B role-play	C discussion	D presentation
	47%	58%	65%	22%
11. What methods are more suitable in the culture course on the students' part?	A attend classes, supplemented by self-study		B study on oneself, supplemented by attending classes	
	75%		25%	

Form table 3, item 8~10 are concerned with teaching methods. In item 8, similar percentages of students choose option A and B, which indicates that although students like knowledge delivering better, they also approve of interactions. In item 9, the knowledge delivering is discussed in detail, about what language should be used mainly. Only 96 choose "in English only" and "mainly in Chinese", which means English should be used mainly in the culture-oriented course, supplemented with Chinese if necessary. In item 10, the interaction is discussed in detail, about which forms of interaction students favour. Here, students like "discussion" best, and then the "role-play" and "questions". It seems that students are reluctant to do "presentation" in culture knowledge. It is probably due to the difficulties of "presentation", or the amount of efforts students may make.

Item 11 is concerned with the learning methods. Up to 525 samples(75%) choose "attend classes, supplemented by self-study", which indicates that culture-oriented course is not an easy job for students to learn independently. Students definitely need help from the teacher.

From the interview, students make comments like "the culture course may be a bit difficult for us, hoping that we can get necessary help from the teacher", "the teacher needs to concern about students' confusion by asking questions, and furthermore, organizes activities to improve out cross-cultural communication skills ", "the teacher should use both the English and Chinese in delivering knowledge", etc.

4) Evaluation dimension

Table 4. Question items and results in evaluation dimension

Question Items	Choice & Results				
12. Which forms of evaluation should be adopted in the course?	A written text	B oral text	C both written and oral tests		
	40%	25%	35%		
13 In written test, what types of question should be involved?	A fill-gaps	B true or false	C choice	D short answers	
	11%	24%	52%	13%	
14 In oral test, what types of activity should be involved?	A discussion in group work	B role-play in group work	C presentation		
	53%	27%	20%		
15. Students' performance like homework or class participation should be taken into account in the evaluation?	A totally approved	B partially approved	C not sure	D partially disapproved	E totally disapproved
	20%	37%	32%	8%	3%

From table 4, item 12~14 are concerned with the forms of evaluation. In item 12, 40% of the total number prefer "written test", but students also think the oral test should be involved as well. In item 13, 52% and 24% favour the "choice" and "T/F" in the written test. Probably these types of test are easier to prepare and answer. The results of item 14 are similar to item 10. Here, students favour group work like "role-play" and "discussion" better than individual work "presentation".

Item 15 is concerned with the formative evaluation. In item 15, only 76 choose "partially disapproved" and "totally disapproved", which means evaluation should not include the summative evaluation only. Formative evaluation like homework or participation needs to be considered to lessen the students' workload and pressure in the final exam. In a word, the forms of evaluation should be as comprehensive as possible.

From the interview, students make comments like "the course should include the tests, so that we may lay a good foundation in the culture knowledge and practice", "the test should contain several forms, not only the written form", etc.

5) Environment dimension

Table 5. Question items and results in environment dimension

Question Items	Choice & Results				
What is the proper teaching period for the course?(90 minutes/week)	A more than 16 weeks	B 16 weeks	C 12 weeks	D 8 weeks	E 4 weeks
	4%	15%	15%	33%	33%
17. Which semester is proper for the course?	A after the 4th semester	B 4th semester	C 3rd semester	D 2nd semester	E 1st semester
	13%	15%	25%	27%	20%
18. What is the proper teaching place for the course?	A in classroom	B mainly in classroom, supplemented with online teaching	C mainly teaching online, supplemented with teaching in classroom		D online teaching
	21%	53%	22%		4%

From table 5, item 16 and 17 are concerned with the teaching time. In item 16, about 34% favour the culture course to be more than 8 weeks, while most students (66%) hope the course should be limited within 4~8 weeks. In item 17, a small number of students choose "after 4th semester" , and most choose "the 2nd " or "the 3rd ". Here, it seems that students would like to start the culture course as early as possible, especially from the 2nd semester.

Item 18 is concerned with the teaching place. Only 31 choose the "online teaching", accounting for 4%; most students favour the normal classroom as the main teaching place, supplemented with online teaching.

From the interviews, students make comments like "the culture course needs to be arranged after we taking the college English test band 4th ", "the teacher may try the online teaching, offering students help and resources, since the portable devices are so popular nowadays ", etc.

5. Course Framework Design

To answer the question 2 ---"Under the needs analysis of Q1, how is a culture-oriented course designed, based on Chinese intangible heritage?", a culture-oriented course framework is presented below, based on the theories of course design strategies and he results of the previous needs analysis.

5.1 Teaching Target

1) Students should learn the culture knowledge and related vocabulary as well. 2) Students should be provided with abundant opportunities to do the cross-cultural communication. 3) students' interest and correct attitude towards Chinese and foreign cultures should be developed. 4) The target should be set properly , not too highly, due to students' lack of the basic knowledge of the intangible cultural heritage.

5.2 Teaching Content

1) A specific coursebook about the heritage is needed, not limited to the printed one. 2) The coursebook should not only offer the written words of the culture knowledge, but comprehensive resources like pictures, video, background knowledge, etc. The exercises should also be included. 3) The oral style of language and the range of 4500~5500 words should be adopted in the course. For the words beyond the range, translation and/or definition may be necessary.

5.3 Teaching and Learning Method

1) As for the teaching method, students favour both the knowledge delivering and interactions. English should be mainly used in knowledge delivering, supplemented with Chinese. Students favour group-work interactions like discussion, role-play and answering questions, but they tend to avoid doing presentation.2) As for the clearing method, students are more willing to attend the normal class, incited of learning online.

5.4 Test and Evaluation

1) Tests should be mainly in the written form like the choice and T/F. Oral tests are also favoured by students, especially in the form of discussion and role-play. 2) Students' performance like homework or participation should be adopted as one form of evaluation in addition to the tests, especially when the culture course offers students credits.

5.5 Teaching Environment

1) As for teaching time, students prefer to start the course from the 2nd semester, with a period of 4~8 weeks. 2) As for teaching place, Students prefer the normal classroom instead of online teaching.

6. Conclusion

In the study, we carry out a questionnaire, based on the sample of 701 learners of college English with different grades, genders and majors, to analyze the learners' needs for the course of Chinese intangible cultural heritage. And from the previous needs analysis, we further try to clarify the teaching objectives, materials, methods,evaluations and environments, and finally design the framework of the culture-oriented course. The study may do a contribution to help learners of college English to study the Chinese culture, and furthermore, set an example to the design of others culture-oriented courses for college English learners.

Although this study involves a comparatively large group of samples, they all come from a provincial university. So whether the results and conclusion can be applied to other universities or students of different language ability is unsure. Meanwhile, the study focuses on the needs analysis of the students, not including other parties like teachers or administrators, who are also closely related to the students and course designing. All of these limitations should be paid attention to, and need our follow-up investigation and data-analysis in the near future.

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