

The Mutual-construction of Cultural Memory for Chinese Cross-cultural Researchers

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[Abstract] Chinese cross-cultural researchers are the carriers and transmitters of Chinese culture as well as the absorbers and introducers of the foreign culture. The cross-cultural researches they did under this cultural identity would form a cultural memory. The new culture established on the basis of the cultural memory is able to develop cross-cultural communication harmoniously and efficiently. In order to build the new culture, people need to make a rational analysis about the cultural identity of Chinese cross-cultural researchers, and to explore how to enhance their cultural identities. Mutual-construction can be considered as a feasible and efficient way to build new culture.

[keywords] Cross-cultural research, cultural identity, cultural memory, new culture, mutual-construction

Introduction

Cross-cultural research in the sense of modern science of China started from 1980s. Due to the strong dependence for language tools of cross-cultural research, the scholars and teachers in the foreign language community become the major force in cross-cultural research field within China at first (Jia, 1997). Later, with the development of international academic exchanges as well as the improvement of China's foreign language teaching, the cross-cultural research connected with the international community gradually. Now, it covers communication, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, culturology, sociology and other subjects, and these subjects continuously intersect and integrate with each other. China's cross-cultural researchers also move beyond the circle of foreign language teachers, and they spread over various related disciplines, especially over linguistic culturology, international relationship and national studies (Hu, 1999).

The researchers play an essential role in China's diplomatic exchanges and cultural construction. To analyze and research the cultural identity of this group will be beneficial to the clarification of other countries' understanding of China's cross-cultural researches, at the same time, it will also carry out related works in a deep-going way and create a foundation for communication theories suitable for their own cultures.

China's cross-cultural researchers mainly learn and master one or more foreign languages after they studied their mother tongue. At this time, they are already the mature cultural individuals in China from the sense of sociology. In the socialization process for decades of years, their thinking modes and behavior patterns have already left an indelible Chinese cultural imprint, which is the guidance for personal behavior and the criterion for judging other people's behaviors. In the process of cross-cultural research, the culture carried by foreign languages, namely the ideas, values and world outlook embodied in the culture will be surely connected with the Chinese cultural imprint formed before. The result of the connection is repulsion or mutual-construction. The repulsion will lead to confusion for cross-cultural researchers, whereas the mutual-construction will encourage the formation of new culture, which is a rational integration of Chinese culture and foreign cultures, as well as a value galaxy based on recognition and understanding. Therefore, the mutual-construction is the direction for the author to explore and analyze the cultural memory of Chinese cross-cultural researchers.

Language and Culture

Language and culture are the important definitions in human beings' scientific and academic history. The numbers of definition for culture, according to the statistics made by scholars, had exceeded 450 at the beginning of 1980s (Chen, 2001); as for language, there are also some descriptions from different

perspective, such as physiology, psychology, pedagogy, anthropology and sociology. For the two definitions, because different scholars have different researching aims and interests, then their starting points and ending, as well as the perspective for seeing questions would be varied, so there are a lot of definitions and descriptions. In order to discuss more conveniently, this paper regards language as a symbolic system which has material outer covering for pronunciation and generally speaking possesses documented form, created for the communication and exchanges for human beings.

The culture embodies the thoughts for people towards nature and society, and the resulting values, as well as overt behavioral patterns. From these, we can see that culture, originated from the ideas for human beings towards nature and society, has relationship orientation; and that the goal of language is to enhance the communication and exchanges for people, so, the language has relationship coordination. Then, we can come to the conclusion that language and culture are interdependent and cannot be separated from each other. If there is no need for formative relation from the culture, the language would have no reason to exist anymore; if there is no coordination for relations from the language, the culture would have no foundation to exist. In human society, no culture could be separated from language, and all languages are carrying culture. The language and culture must be interwoven with each other (Chen & Han, 2007).

Cultural Memory

Memory, as a research field, is one of the major subjects in a long period of time. The memory under the psychology perspective mainly starts from the psychological function of human minds and pays attention to an independent person about how he receives, explains and reserves the information he got, and whether he can reproduce the information or not (Bartlett, 1998). The information we mentioned mainly refers to knowledge and skills. It places the memory under the observation of sociology, but its research is divorced from psychological function of human mind to emphasize the memory's dependence for social interaction. Social interaction refers to one or multiple personal relation network for human beings.

The relation network has a huge impact on the formation and maintenance of individual behavior and attitude. In other words, if there is no communication practice with others, it will be hard for the individuals to establish behaviors which have social values, and cannot form attitudes with social values. Behavior and attitude, as the representation of memory, are the products of relation, and once they are separated from the relation, they would lose their meanings. Because behavior and attitude belong to the culture analyzed in this paper, the memory under the sociology field is the so-called cultural memory.

Cultural memory is a term of sociology and history before, which comes up with by Jan. Assmann, the professor of Egyptology in Heidelberg University of German, on the basis of group memory proposed by French sociologist M. Halbwachs (Welzer, 2001). The group memory mainly emphasizes the constraints of individual history memory from society or group, whereas the cultural memory describes the impact of text, picture and ceremony enhanced in multi-intergenerational repetition as traditions on time consciousness, historical consciousness, self-consciousness and world picture of individuals (Miao, 2008). Because Assmann primarily uses cultural memory to explain historical questions, therefore, in his theory, he mainly emphasizes the impact of historical, religious, mythical and philosophical models on individual spiritual life (Schraten, 2011).

In light of different questions people want to solve, the paper will have something to reserve and create when using cultural memory. From the perspective of language education, cultural memory should be regarded as the influence of cultural information carried by one kind of language and subsided by the history of the nation, country or group on value, thinking model and behavior pattern of language users. When it comes to foreign language teaching, cultural memory also includes learners on the basis of their own national cultures made a mutual-construction by rational analysis of foreign cultures carried by foreign languages. In a word, the cultural memory analyzed in this paper refers to China's cross-cultural researchers' recognition of value, thinking model and behavior pattern in foreign nation's culture expressed by one language in the process of research, meanwhile, they made a mutual-construction between one kind of culture carried by foreign language and Chinese culture carried by Chinese in the aim of enhancing the harmonious communication between China and other countries, then it would form a new culture which is

inclusive, valuable and instructive.

Cultural Identity

The cultural identity of Chinese cross-cultural researchers discussed in this paper are the carriers and transmitters of Chinese culture as well as the absorbers and introducers of the foreign culture bases on two or multiple languages and cultures. The reason why we made this judgment is the rational goal of cross-cultural research, namely absorption, promotion and communication. In order to promote, Chinese people need to have our own roots; in order to absorb, they need to have relevant ability; in order to communicate, and they need to have equal status. Chinese people's recognition for this cultural identity is the root for promoting national culture; the holding of this cultural identity of foreign language learners and users would form the ability to absorb foreign culture; the ability developed and formed on the basis of root would create equal status. In the situation of equal status, the two communicative sides are the carriers and transmitters of national culture as well as the absorbers and introducers of the foreign culture respectively.

From the perspective of cultural adaptation and cultural introduction, the two communicative sides which are representatives of foreign culture to each other cannot situate in an equal status with respect to the ability of language culture. However, if we target at harmonious communication, we can surely build a new culture. In this culture, the status of both communicative sides are equal. The corresponding German word of new culture is KultuR. This written form shows the symbolic meaning of the word: the "Kul-" which represents one culture from left to right and the "-tuR" which represents another culture from right to left are close to each other from the viewing angle. This can be used to show any two cultures exist in the world, although they are different, they still have some similarities, meanwhile, they develop towards each other, and have a reciprocal momentum and will communicate and integrate.

What's more, from the overall viewing angle, the similarities are more than differences between the two cultures, which means when it comes to cultural communication, we can seek common ground on major questions while reserving differences on minor ones. The KultuR is constituted of "Kul-" and "-tuR", which shows the KultuR, as a new culture, is formed by rational integration on the basis of existing culture, rather than a culture coming from nowhere just like water without a source or a tree without root. Alienating the letter "r" in standard spelling into "R" is to show that the new culture is not only a simple merger and piecing together for the original culture, but also an integration and even a surpassing. Therefore, the process of forming KultuR is surely a process of mutual-construction with original cultural identity.

To sum up, in cross-cultural research process which targeted at participating and enhancing cross-cultural communication between China and foreign countries, Chinese scholars should abide by the cultural identity as the carriers of Chinese culture, strive to build the cultural identity as the absorbers of the foreign culture, and be committed to establishing the cultural identity for themselves as the transmitters of Chinese culture as well as the introducers of the foreign culture.

How to Strengthen the Culture Identity of the Cross-Culture Researchers in China?

As I have mentioned all along, our cross-culture researchers are always in a process to confirm their culture identities. Since the purposes and the identities have been clarified, how to strengthen their multiple culture identities has become a new noticeable problem.

The carriers of Chinese culture: The individual of cross-culture researchers of China develops under the Chinese culture environment. Generally speaking, the world outlooks, life outlooks, values as well as the ways of thinking and behaviors of the researchers all penetrate in the Chinese culture memory. The individual certainly becomes the carrier of Chinese culture when it acts as a member of a nation or a community and a culture memory participator. The culture identity can make the individual work, study and living successfully in the corresponding social environment. However, if we want to develop the identity from Chinese culture carrier into Chinese transmitter, we should make culture memory come into reality, in other words, we should externalized the culture memory in forms of language communication and other communications rather than only keep the potential culture memory. Only the culture memory has been externalized can it has popularity. The externalization makes us know what and why.

If we want 'know why' about the culture memory, we must change acquisition to learning. As acquisition develops naturally in social evolution, so it is unconscious. The learning is conscious on the contrary. In order to learn things from acquisition, we should reflect reasonably on the ways of thinking and behavior which had been formed, to seek the high level value basis and the theoretical foundation to do so rather than changing the ways of thinking and behavior thoroughly. The only way to achieve this goal is cultivating the sensibility of our own culture, which requires the longitudinal consciousness on history on one hand and comparative consciousness on cross-culture on the other hand. Historical consciousness encourages us to think why the things can change with the time going by while the cross-culture comparative consciousness makes us to think what the things looks like and the reason why they looks like that. If we lack these two consciousness, everything seemed insignificance, which turns to be an automated pattern. As this pattern cannot be expressed, it can only guide ourselves rather than others; meanwhile, it can communicate in the same society and community rather than benefiting culture communication development.

If the cross-culture researchers want to be real Chinese culture carriers and transmitters, they must cultivate the sensibility of their own culture, externalized the unconscious culture memory to conscious culture knowledge. They should also perceive the consciousness of their own culture.

The receiver of foreign languages: Most of the cross-culture researchers in China get to know the foreign language culture through the ways of acquiring in their own country when they grow up. At the same time, they had formed their values, ways of thinking and behavior, which can reflect the Chinese culture. This culture memory is the base of behavioral expression and value judgment of the researchers. As the judgment has strong stability, it can change appropriately but cannot change completely. Just like the "script" (Schema) can only assimilate and adapt the extraneous messages. Assimilation classifies the new messages into the script, while the adaption changes the script in order to let the individual adapt to the new environment. They complete the original script to benefit the individual to acknowledge, behave and judge. In this occasion, the foreign language culture becomes a kind of resources which can assimilate the original individual script and promote the adaption of the individual.

Along with the economic integration and the economic globalization, the world present a diversified feature day by day. On this occasion, if any nation, country, community or even a person stand still and refuse to make progress, they will be finally abandoned by history; even they may still survive for a period, still they may lose many wonderful things. Facing with this situation, the cross-culture researchers of China should have multi-cultural consciousness which requires us to admit the equal status on the culture of every country, to recognize critically on the values of different culture. Similarly, the researchers should realize the values of other country's culture, and do their best to absorb different kinds of culture knowledge that contains certain value to our Chinese culture.

The cross-culture researchers in China contact directly with one or several kinds of foreign languages that contains certain culture. They generalize the values, ways of thinking and behavior standard of the people in relevant countries and will present them as a kind of explicit knowledge. The learners can know what and why through this way. The sharing of the culture memory in the language is called "know why". We should analyze this kind of culture memory reasonably through many strategies such as acknowledging, admitting, quoting and displacing. The cross-culture researchers in China become the receivers of foreign culture by acknowledging and admitting the foreign culture in foreign languages. And we become the introducers of foreign culture through quoting and displacing.

Chinese culture transmitter and foreign culture introducer: The cross-culture researchers of China change their identities from the carriers to transmitters, from the receiver to introducers of Chinese culture. Even it has practical and strategic significance, if we can only compare these two culture identities rather than fusing them, we can only seeking knowledge in culture rather than innovating the culture. Culture knowledge seeking refers to transmitting the culture as knowledge, while culture innovation refers to creating a new culture. Culture knowledge seeking develops the cross-culture communication and creates use value rather than new value, while culture innovation can make the communication more efficient and harmonious and create new value as well. Therefore, culture innovation belongs to a higher level.

If we want to achieve culture innovation in the cross-culture communication, we must depend on

culture mutual-construction. Mutual-construction is a kind of approach aiming at creating a new culture. The subject of Mutual-construction is the cross-culture researchers of China and the objects are Chinese culture and foreign culture. There are two levels in mutual-construction in this essay, one is on the object, and the other is on the members of the subject when it acts as a community. Based on Chinese culture, the object mutual-construction can create a new culture to guide cross-culture practice through methods of acknowledging, admitting, quoting and displacing.

Among them, the quoting and displacing are more useful. As the new culture has surpass two original (or several kinds) of culture, it can govern the behavior in the relevant culture category and create a new kind of culture situation. This new kind of culture situation brings a new feeling to both sides of the communication. It just feels like the Chinese in the Chinese culture situation and foreigners in their own culture situation. The reason why a new kind of situation can be produced is that the new culture brings a new culture memory to its own members. When the subject acts as a group, the mutual-construction of members in the group means that when the culture memory act as a kind of group memory, it should develop in the frame that create by the group.

Therefore, the culture memory has the ability to govern and control. The researchers form a unique group, and every member of the group will have different feelings and achievements during the practicing of cross-culture researching. When all the experience is exchanged, it can create a kind of culture memory which is the raw material of the new culture. So the cross-culture researchers of China should exchange their experience extensively under proper condition, at the same time, Chinese society encourages and supports this kind of experience summary, personal reflection and the researches on academic achievement. Only in this way can we create the colonial culture memory of the cross-culture researchers through mutual-construction.

Conclusion

From every point of view, the cross-culture communications of all of the nations and countries in the world are becoming unavoidable facts. At the same time, it will sustaining for a long time. Therefore, the cross-culture researchers in China act as one of the subjects of communication. How to accomplish their mission better has become one of the focus issues in our educational circles. The essay demonstrates the culture identity of the cross-culture researchers in China. And based on this, it constructs the culture memory through mutual-construction, and then make the new culture necessary and possible to promote the developing of cross-culture communications between China and other foreign countries efficiently and harmoniously.

However, the cross-culture belongs to the practical field. No matter how many the theoretical discussion there are, they cannot replace the communication practices. Even the foreign language learners can easily know what and why about the foreign culture, but it is hard for them to apply the culture. Therefore, they can use and create conditions to internalize the external knowledge. If we want to internalize the knowledge, we have to learn. So the learners should work positively based on the knowledge-learning, skills-cultivating and will-establishing.

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