

大学通识教育核心课程教材

# 中西文化比较

Chinese and Western Culture: A Comparative Approach

主编 杨瑞英 副主编 田美



西安交通大学出版社  
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

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# 前言

20世纪80年代,在中国大城市的街道上遇到外国人会是一件稀奇事。改革开放30多年来,中国发生了巨大变化,外国人到中国工作、经商、旅游已经日渐频繁,中国人到国外求学、工作、旅游的人数也快速增长。因此,对许多人来说,跨文化交际已经不是偶发事件,而是日常学习和工作所必需。对于高校学生来说,无论是求学期间,还是毕业以后,需要进行跨文化交际的场合无疑是很多的。要顺利地开展跨文化交际,认识与理解中西方文化的基本差异是非常必要的。本教材旨在拓展学生的文化视野,提高学生对中西方文化差异的批判理解能力,并从新的角度思考和认识中国文化,避免在跨文化交际中出现僵化思维和误解,提高学生的跨文化意识及跨文化交流能力。

本教材关注文化构成要素的隐性部分,即不易通过肉眼观察到,但却对人的行为具有深远影响的内容,避免对文化现象的简单罗列。每章的内容包括观察文化现象的差异或个性,探讨造成差异的原因,以及差异可能造成的认识失误或交际失误,或跨文化交际案例中存在的文化失误因素。每个章节均有相应的学习任务或思考题,以实现跨文化知识增长与跨文化交流能力提高的双重目标。此外,本教材全部用英文写成,原因之一是跨文化交际大多是使用英语的,直接通过英语学习有利于应用,同时学习过程有助于促进英语语言水平的提高。

本教材共包括九章。第一章为概论部分,考察文化的定义、文化的要素、文化的分类、文化比较的态度等内容,引导学生对文化差异性进行批判性理解。第二章重点讨论地理环境及经济形态对文化产生与发展的影响。第三章旨在让学生了解中西宗教文化的差异及其影响,进而探索产生这种差异的原因;重点是基督教的神人观与一神论及中国宗教的天人观与多神论之间的差异与影响。第四章重点阐述中西文化的价值基础及中西社会行为规范,如西方文化中的机会均等、个人本位与

中国文化中的忠孝仁义及群体认同。第五章为中西语言与思维的比较,重点讨论中西语言在语音、词汇、语法和句法层面的宏观差异以及中西思维方式的差别,使学生在比较中深入理解中西文化的认识基础,即中西思维方式的异同并理解语言与文化的复杂关系。第六章为中西教育理念及方法的比较,重点分析中西教学方式、学习风格、学习策略与师生关系的差异,旨在引导学生反思并对中西教育实践教学差异作出非实质主义解读,帮助学生批判理解中西教育与学术文化的差别、交融与共通。第七章为中西艺术比较,重点讨论“写意”的中国艺术和“写实”的西方艺术的风格及其表现形式;中西美术分野、演变及其文化阐释。第八章为中西文学比较,在分析中西方诗歌异同的基础上,重点讨论了中国的词与西方十四行诗之间的异同及其文化阐释。第九章为中西音乐比较及发展演变,重点分析中西民间音乐所具有的共性特征及民间音乐在音乐发展史上不可取代的地位,以批驳西方纯音乐至上的偏见。

本教材是西安交通大学通识类核心课程“中西文化比较”课程建设的成果。教材使用对象为选修该门通识类核心课程的大学生或研究生。因该教材的主要目的是加深学生对中西方文化基本特征的批判性认识,开拓视野,提升跨文化交流能力,因此对于希望系统深入了解中西文化差异并提高英语水平的读者,也不失为一本有价值的参考书。

《中西文化比较》的写作团队由西安交通大学外国语学院杨瑞英、田美、彭凤玲、陈大地、杨婕和刘影组成。其中,杨瑞英担任主编,田美担任副主编。全书共有九章,田美负责撰写第一和第六章,杨瑞英负责撰写第五章,彭凤玲负责撰写第二和第三章,杨婕负责撰写第四章,陈大地负责撰写第七和第八章,其中第七章和韩璐合作撰写,刘影负责撰写第九章。该书第一稿得到了 Michael Serwatka 的指导,特此致谢。

由于时间和水平所限,错误和不足之处在所难免,真诚希望读者多提宝贵意见。

杨瑞英 田 美

2016年3月



# Preface

## **Introduction to Chinese and Western Culture: A Comparative Approach**

Back in the 1980s, rarely could we see a foreigner on the streets of Chinese cities. Now with tremendous economic and social changes, more and more foreigners travel around China, do business with Chinese or work in China. Meanwhile, the number of Chinese people travelling, studying and working abroad is increasing every year. Intercultural communication has been inevitable to many Chinese people in their daily lives. For Chinese college students, it is more and more important for them to develop their intercultural communication skills as it is of significance for them to pursue further studies at international universities, and also to expand their lines of work. This textbook is designed to facilitate Chinese college students' understanding of Chinese culture and the Western culture as well as to develop their intercultural communication ability. More importantly, the textbook approaches cultural phenomena from a critical perspective. It helps students to critically reflect on Chinese and Western culture, so as to avoid cultural misunderstandings, stereotypes and biases in intercultural communication.

This textbook avoids presenting a list of cultural "facts" in an over-simplistic way. Instead, it focuses on the "hidden" cultural elements, which are not easy to be observed by the naked eye, but have profound influences on human behaviors. Each chapter of the textbook observes unique cultural phenomena, explores cultural differences, discusses causes of the differences and analyzes how the differences lead to failures in intercultural communication. In each chapter, activities or questions to stimulate in-depth thinking are provided to help students to acquire cultural knowledge and to improve intercultural communication skills. The textbook is written in English. Since English is the most frequently used language in

intercultural communication worldwide, studying a textbook in English will help students to apply what they learn to daily intercultural communication. This also contributes to an improvement of students' English proficiency.

This textbook consists of nine chapters. Chapter one sketches definitions, elements and classification of culture. This chapter discusses problematic attitudes in intercultural communication, known as ethnocentrism and cultural essentialism, and guides students to approach cultural issues in a more critical perspective. Chapter two explores influences of geographical and socio-economic environments on the emergence and development of China and Western culture. Chapter three discusses the impacts of religious culture, the differences between Chinese and Western religious culture, and the causes of such differences. This chapter particularly focuses on monotheism, a feature of Chinese religion, and polytheism, a feature of Western religions, and their influences on Chinese and Western people. Chapter four discusses values and social norms of Chinese culture, such as filial piety and collectivism, and those of Western culture, such as equality of opportunity and individualism. Chapter five helps students to gain in-depth understanding of the relationship between language and culture. This chapter compares differences between the English and Chinese languages at the pronunciation, morphological, grammatical and syntactic levels, as well as the differences in Chinese and Western thinking patterns. Chapter six focuses on educational beliefs and practices. This chapter challenges the essentialist interpretation of the differences in teaching methods, learning styles, learning strategies and teacher-student relationship between China and Western countries. It encourages students to approach Chinese and Western academic culture from a critical perspective. Chapter seven compares the development of art in China and the West. It discusses the "impressionist" style of Chinese art and the "realistic" style of Western art. It also discusses the division, evolution and appreciation of Chinese and Western art. Chapter eight compares Chinese and Western literature. This chapter analyzes differences and similarities of Chinese and Western poetry, with a focus on a comparison and cultural interpretation of Chinese *Ci* and Western



sonnets. Chapter nine compares the development of music in China and the West. It discusses the significance of folk music in the history of music, stresses the common features of Chinese and Western folk music, and criticizes the ethnocentric opinion of the supremacy of Western music.

This textbook is an achievement of the development of "Chinese and Western Culture: A Comparative Approach", a core course of general education at Xi'an Jiaotong University. The textbook is designed for use in the course by undergraduate and postgraduate students. The book is also of value to readers who would like to systematically and critically understand differences and similarities between Chinese and Western culture, broaden their horizons, improve English proficiency and enhance their intercultural communication skills.

*Chinese and Western Culture: A Comparative Approach* has been written by teachers working at the School of Foreign Studies, Xi'an Jiaotong University, i. e. Ruiying Yang, Mei Tian, Fengling Peng, Jie Yang, Dadi Chen, Lu Han and Ying Liu. Ruiying Yang serves as chief editor of the textbook. Mei Tian serves as associate editor of the textbook. The textbook consists of nine chapters. Mei Tian is the author of Chapter one and Chapter six. Ruiying Yang is the author of Chapter five. Fengling Peng is the author of Chapter two and Chapter three. Jie Yang is the author of Chapter four. Dadi Chen and Lu Han are authors of Chapter seven. Dadi Chen is also the author of Chapter eight. Ying Liu is the author of Chapter nine. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Dr. Michael Serwatka, who kindly commented on the first draft of this book.

Due to limited time and ability, the textbook inevitably contains drawbacks. We sincerely welcome comments and suggestions from students and all other readers.

Ruiying Yang & Mei Tian  
March, 2016



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# Chapter 1

## Understanding Culture

*Mei Tian*

Culture is a concept closely relevant to our lives. Culture is significant because it distinguishes human beings from lower animals, and that all human beings live in cultures which in turn influence our ways of thinking and behaving. Culture is an umbrella term covering almost all social phenomena, from education to religion, from language to modes of behavior, from thinking patterns to value systems, from arts and literature to economic and political activities. Commonly used as it is, culture is notoriously difficult to define. It has different meanings for researchers in different areas. Given the significance of culture to human life, this introductory chapter is devoted to an exploration of the meaning of the concept.

This chapter will first introduce definitions of culture, characteristics and classification of cultures. It will then focus on differences between the concept of culture and two other terms, i. e. race and ethnicity. The subsequent section of the chapter focuses on fallacious attitudes in cross-cultural studies. Finally a dialectical methodology will be proposed as a more appropriate approach in studying cultural issues.



### 1.1 Culture: The Definitions

**Activity 1** Please write down whatever comes to your mind when you hear or think of 'culture'. 'Iceberg' and 'fish in water' are metaphors people have used to refer to culture. What do the metaphors tell you? Try giving your own definitions of culture.

Culture is a difficult term to define. Williams (1983) once pointed out that culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) identified 164 different meanings of the term from British and American sources. In this book, we do not provide a singular definition of culture, as this would be restrictive rather than thought-provoking. Following Martin & Nakayama (2010), we agree that it is more appropriate to analyze culture from different perspectives so as to appreciate the complexity of the concept.

Social science researchers view culture as the totality of cultural values, beliefs and norms, which guides our perceptions and behaviors. For example, an introductory book on sociology defines 'culture' as 'the language, beliefs, values and norms, customs, roles, knowledge, and skills which combine to make up the way of life of any society' (Browne, 2015). Similarly, Matsumoto (1996: 16) describes culture as '... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.'

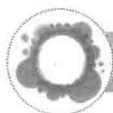
In the field of anthropology, researchers put emphasis on culture as communicative patterns. Verbal and nonverbal activities bear significance for these researchers when defining culture, who believe that through such activities social members acquire social knowledge. Geertz (1973:89), a representative of this group of researchers, defines culture as:

'... an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men (*sic.*) communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life'.

In recent years, many scholars tend to study culture from a critical perspective. Critical theory perceives culture as contingent, dynamic and ever changing, while social actions and personal identities are restricted by regulations, social rules and 'power of discourse'. One definition given by a critical scholar is as below:



'...move beyond hegemonic definitions of culture as 'shared and transmitted from generation to generation' that assume that we all experience a 'common culture' and ... is passed down from one generation to the next in a linear and seemingly static fashion... This is a dangerous myth... that suppress[es] and erase[s] marginalised voices and experiences.' (Gust Yep, 2002: 231, cited in Martin & Nakayama, 2010:91)



### 1.2 Characteristics of Culture

**Activity 2** In the last section we reviewed the ways that culture is defined by sociologists. Different as the definitions are, they tend to stress some similar features. Below are another three representative definitions. Read these definitions, and try to figure out the characteristics of culture that they draw attention to.

'Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i. e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.'

Kroeber & Kluckhohn(1952:181, cited by Spencer-Oatey, 2009)

'[Culture is] ... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.'

Matsumoto(1996: 16, cited by Spencer-Oatey, 2009)