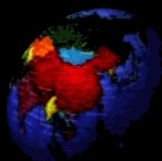


跨文化交际研究

A STUDY ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

赵云龙 著

BY ZHAO YUNLONG



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序

郭英剑

在美国从事了历时一年的博士后研究回国后，我反思一下，给我印象较深的感受之中，有一点是：我们对美国文化的研究和美国人对中国文化的了解，都还远远不够。

美国人常说“Chinese culture”一词，但很少有人去问，“What is Chinese culture?”，似乎这个问题对他们来说已经不是问题了。中国的长城和秦始皇兵马俑，中国餐馆和饺子，中国武术和气功，中国传统医学和针灸……这些都是他们眼里的中国文化。但中国传统文化的博大精深、5000年的中华文明史、中国人特定的思想观念与文化精神，却是多数美国人无法了解到的。

想想也不奇怪，我们大多数的中国人，尤其是没有去过美国的人，印象中的美国无非是纽约的摩天大楼、华盛顿的白宫、拉斯韦加斯的赌场和迪斯尼乐园等等，我们对美国的人文特质和美国多样化的文化特性的了解显然也是很不够的。

我们所面临的时代，是一个多元文化的时代，是一个多语言的时代，是一个现代传播技术“强制”我们进行跨文化交际的时代。众所周知，我们的祖先在公元前138年—公元前126年张骞通西域之后，就沿着陆路和海上的丝绸之路与世界各国人民开始了文化交流。不过，那时的交流与今日的跨文化交流在范围和频率上是无法比

拟的。20世纪60年代加拿大学者克鲁汉提出了“世界村”的概念。在科学技术日新月异的今天，尤其是交通、通讯和网络技术的飞速发展，“世界村”里的人们之间的交往就更加便利、更加频繁了。密切的跨文化交流由此成为当今世界的一个重要特征。在我国向全世界敞开大门、改革开放的力度不断加大的时候，不同文化之间的信息交流这一社会现象，日益明显地摆在了每个人、每个群体的面前。在这种情况下，为了使不同文化背景下的人们能够进行有效的交流、建立良好的关系、增进理解与合作，也为了不再出现由于文化差异而在交流中引发的误会或误解，我们迫切需要让更多的人了解跨文化交流的知识，培养人们跨文化的意识，提高大家的跨文化交际的能力。尤其对经常从事对外交往的人来说，就更是如此了。

从这个意义上讲，《跨文化交际研究》一书的出版是有其积极意义的。

本书提供给我们的一个最有价值的观念是：人类的文化虽然各异，但仍存在着共通之处；语言和文化是动态发展的，并且随着社会的发展而发展。作者敏锐地观察到，以前的一些有关中西文化差异的概括与处于迅速变革中的当今中国人尤其是青年人的实际生活已明显不相符合。书中提出了这些变化了的观念和行为习惯，并对此进行了细致入微的研究。我想，这必定会对人们思

考和克服由于中西方文化差异引起的问题有所启迪和帮助。

可以说,跨文化交际学发源于文化人类学。1959年,美国文化人类学家爱德华·霍尔在他的著作《无声的语言》中,第一次使用了“跨文化交际”(intercultural communication)一词。“文化”是跨文化交际学中的核心因素。文化的基本要素是传统的思想观念和价值,它存在于各种内隐和外显的模式之中,借助于符号的运用得以学习和传播,并构成人类群体的特殊成就。每个民族在世代延续的过程中,都积累了具有特色的文化。所有民族的文化构成了丰富多样、绚丽多彩的世界文化,各民族的文化差异反映了不同民族的文化特点。正是由于来自不同文化的人们所进行的交际,使各种文化在长期的交流中,不断得到融会、贯通和发展。

应该说,会通和超越是中西文化交往的一大趋势。所谓会通,就是中外文化的有机结合;所谓超越,是指在有机结合基础上的飞跃。我认为,人类不同文化系统之间总是在会通和超越中向着更高层次递进的。1921年英国哲学大师罗素来到了中国,在对中国文化进行了考察后,他感到自己对中西文化的交流有了新的认识。次年他写了著名的文章《中西文明比较》,他说:不同文明之间的交流,过去已经多次证明是人类文明发展的里程碑。希腊学习埃及,罗马借鉴希腊,阿拉伯参照罗马帝国,中世纪的欧洲又模仿阿拉伯,而文艺复兴时期的欧洲又模仿

拜占庭帝国。在许多这种交流中，作为“学生”的落后国家最终总是超过做老师的先进国家。我想说的是，我们期待着伟大的中华文化在吸取世界人类先进文化的过程中进一步发扬和光大。

云龙1984年大学本科英语专业毕业后，曾长期在校外事办供职。后曾在新西兰学习一年有余。1999年又在西南师范大学外语学院获得了英语语言文学硕士学位。同年他调入河南省人民政府新闻办公室任副主任，开始做对外宣传工作。独特的生活经历，使他对跨文化交际中所遇到的种种问题特别敏感。但他并没有仅止于此，而是对此进行了深入、细致的研究，在自己硕士论文的基础上，写出了这本《跨文化交际研究》。在这本书即将付梓之际，我很高兴成为这本书的第一读者，并为之作序。

我还想说的是，云龙在作了政府官员以后，仍能在诸多的应酬中抽空坚持读书、写文章，实属难能可贵。据我所知，他在忙碌的工作之余，最大的爱好便是买书、读书、思考，这些年还写了不少文章。这种勤奋精神令人钦佩和赞许。

古人云：“士不可以不弘毅，任重而道远”。愿与云龙共勉。

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Preface

This book is about communication between people with different cultures. When one has to exchange messages with members of another culture who have different cultural values, he or she always feels difficulties in getting his/her point across and in understanding what is communicated to him/her. Intercultural communication is a term I use to include the entire range of communications across boundaries of different cultural groups. I focus my attention in this book to a considerable extent on language, culture and communication, and I try to explain why cultural differences cause these difficulties and to offer some means to overcome it.

As we all know, encounters between people of different cultural background have existed forever, and equally forever, so misunderstandings occur frequently between them. Here is a typical example (Deng Yanchang, 1989:1): once a group of Chinese was visiting the home of a fairly well-to-do American. As they were shown around the house, they commented, "You have a very nice home. It's so beautiful." The hostess smiled with obvious pleasure and replied in good American fashion "Thank you"—which caused surprise among some of her Chinese guests. Later, while conversing at the dinner table, the host remarked to

the Chinese interpreter, a young lady who had graduated not long ago from a Chinese university, "Your English is excellent. Really quite fluent." To this she demurred, "No, no. My English is quite poor"—an answer that he had not expected and found a bit puzzling.

Was the American hostess' reply immodest, as it seemed to some of the Chinese? Was the young Chinese interpreter's remark insincere, as it sounded to the Americans?

Events like these are fairly common when people of different language and cultures communicate. I worked at the Foreign Affairs Office of Henan Normal University for about 15 years, and noticed that even many Chinese students of English major have communicative problems with foreigners, not to mention those non-English majors. When a student wants to see a foreign teacher, he/she is not aware of the necessity of making an appointment in advance, and he/she goes directly to the foreign teacher's and knocks the door. When the students have conversation with a foreign teacher at his/her apartment, they often ask some improper questions concerning age, income, marriage and other private matters. Some always take and look at the things, like photo-album, on the desk at their ease without seeking permission from the host.

Year by year, as China carried the policy of "opening to the outside world and economic reform," contacts between individual Chinese and foreigners have multiplied. Then barriers between Chinese and foreigners began to crumble, and did so at an ever more rapid rate. Obviously, what caused these incidents is unawareness or ignorance of basic knowledge about intercultural communication and the differences between Chinese culture and the Western cultures. Because of cultural differences, misunderstandings arise. These are the situations we often come across: although the language grammar used in communication is faultless, the same word or expression does not mean the same thing to different peoples; a serious question causes amusement or laughter beyond the speaker's expectation; a harmless statement causes displeasure or even anger. This is why Chinese businessmen sometimes lose their foreign costumers during the negotiations. The world is getting smaller in terms of globalization and how fast information gets passed around, at the same time, larger. Smaller in the sense that this world is being globalized and it is easy to come across with one another. Larger in the sense that there are new markets, new languages and new cultures to understand, as we communicate with each other around the world. My point is that whatever achievements we have

made in English teaching and learning in China since 1978, we still have much to do on the way to successful and effective intercultural communication.

Therefore, this book attempts to analyze the features of communication, the peculiarities of intercultural communication, and to study the cultural meanings and major cultural differences in communication between Chinese and native English speakers. It sets forth approaches to increasing awareness of intercultural differences, so as to help the Chinese people to attain the intercultural competence, to avoid misunderstandings and to achieve effective and successful communication. I think this is a very urgent task in China.

Since American culture has the most mobility in interacting with other cultures, this book has drawn more interest of Americans than any other people in the world. This study is valuable for those who have frequent contact with foreigners as foreign affairs officials, businessmen, language teachers, tourist guides, foreign student advisers and consultants working overseas.

What is supposed to be made clear is that, when we study cultural differences between China and the West, we should not denigrate or change our own customs, beliefs, attitudes and values. For the sake of communication, we

may behave and speak in accordance with Western linguistic and cultural rules governing interpersonal relationships to accommodate ourselves to the Western culture, but we must not and need not to give up our own culture. However, we are supposed to be aware that if we do not understand how Westerners behave and what their beliefs, attitudes and values are, sooner or later, or more or less, we would come across problems, unconsciously or whatever, in communicating with them. Therefore, a good understanding of the differences between cultures is requisite to those who want to make a successful intercultural communication.

This book is intended for those Chinese who study English and use it to communicate with English native speakers. The research that has been done, though intensive, is far from exhaustive.

The aim of the book is thus closely intertwined: to raise cultural awareness, and, in so doing, to promote language learning and practicing of Chinese people. It is the author's sincere hope that in the content of this book, readers will find a modicum of interest and will in a very modest way contribute to intercultural communication.

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Chapter I Language, Culture and Communication

1. 1 Language and Culture

1.1.1 Language

A language is what the members of a particular society speak. It is the medium through which the manners, morals, and mythology of a society are passed on to the next generation. The essence of language is human activity—activity on the part of one individual to make himself or herself understood, and activity on the part of that other to understand what was in the mind of the first. Language stands at the center of human affairs, from the most prosaic to the most profound.

In language, function goes hand in hand with structure, for the structure of each sentence specifies the uses to which it can be put. For this reason, function is as important to the study of language as structure. The fundamental function of language is communication (Herbert H. Clark & Eve V. Clark, 1977:25). In this activity there are three main elements:

- (1) a speaker
- (2) a listener
- (3) a signaling system (for example, the English language)

Communication begins with speakers. Listeners receive the signal and take it in for immediate use. With that, one stage of communication is complete. As description shows, the function of language is intimately bound up

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with the speakers' and listeners' mental activities during communication, in particular with the speakers' intentions, the ideas speakers want to convey, and the listeners' current knowledge.

As a primary form of communication, language is of great importance to people in groups. Language patterns are reflective of people's culture or subculture. Even when people are speaking the same language there is a great deal of misunderstanding, because of individual differences. Therefore, it becomes easy to understand why people who do not have the same cultural and linguistic background misunderstand each other. There are certain phrases in a language that are either uninterpretable, or, if translated literally, unconveyable, which do not convey the many dimensions the phrase encompasses.

As Nida (1993:106) noted that some people have thought that each language is so distinct that there is no valid way in which the discourse of one language can be translated into another. But at least ninety percent of the fundamental structures of all languages are quite similar, and language universals far outweigh the divergencies. Languages are too-ended, and human imagination is too creative to ever be rigidly ruled by the regulations of syntax or of any other feature of language.

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1. 1 Language and Culture

1.1.2 Culture

The anthropological and sociological literature defines *culture* in hundreds of different ways. A definition used by Geert Hofstede (1984:21) suits our purpose best:

Culture is "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. Culture, in this sense, includes systems of values; and values are among the building blocks of culture."

This definition identifies a culture as a set of values. People in different cultures live in different societies with different geographic environment at different state of technical development and at a particular moment in time. The definition of culture to a great extent depends upon the nature of material things that play an essential role in the society. Such things as houses, instruments, machines, vehicles, weapons, clothing and food are a material foundation for social life. A culture is passed down from one generation to another. It consists of the patterns of thinking transfer that parents transfer to their children, teachers to their students, friends to their friends, leaders to their followers, and followers to their leaders (Gudykunst

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1. 1 Language and Culture

and Kim, 1978). It is acquired, and is not innate. On the one hand, culture is persistent, enduring, and omnipresent, and on the other side, it is ever-changing and on-going. Porter and Samovar (1981:19) defined culture as “the deposit of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, timing, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe and material objects and possessions acquired by a large group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.”

Barry Tomalin & Susan Stempleski (1998:11) realize that the study of British and American/Canadian life and institutions has been a traditional part of school curricula in Europe and North America. These courses emphasize the ‘big C’ elements – history, geography, institutions, literature, art, and music – and the way of life. They recognize that the subject itself has broadened as a result of the influences described above. ‘Big C’ (‘achievement culture’) remains as it was, but ‘little c’ (‘behavior culture’) has been broadened to include culturally-influenced beliefs and perceptions, especially as expressed through language, but also through cultural behaviors that affect acceptability in the host community. The culturally-influenced behaviors which constitute ‘little c’ culture should nevertheless be clearly