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Personal Information:

Rosenkivst, Wei Hing
PhD
Department of Chinese
Dalarna University
791 88 Falun, Sweden

Email: whi@du.se

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Flipping the Classroom – Integrating Intercultural Communication Competence into a Chinese Foreign Language Course
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Abstract

The rapid development of information communicative technology today not only accelerates the pace of internationalization and globalization but also shape the modes of human communication. Facing this overwhelming challenge, the cross-cultural and societal aspects of pragmatics, intercultural communication competence has especially become one of the main focuses in second/foreign language education worldwide.

Responding to this challenge, the latest issued official documents for Chinese as a second/foreign language education in China propose a renewed syllabus, emphasizing the importance of culture as an integral element in effective communication. However, how to integrate intercultural communication theories into present foreign language courses remains mostly on a theoretical level. Very few practical or empirical studies have been done in this academic arena.

This motivated the implementation of an action research in which aims to explore the possibilities and limitations of integrating Chinese culture and intercultural communication theory into a present Chinese foreign language course for beginners. The research utilizes an interactive online learning platform to deliver a series of online tasks - “flipping the classroom” – to explicitly demonstrate how cultural differences affect the language used by Chinese, English and Swedish speakers. Through case studies and other brainstorming activities, the tasks gradually enhance the students’ awareness of cross-cultural differences in varying social situations.

This paper will present the findings of this action research, in particular, the design and implementation of the online tasks for “flipping the classroom”, such as: 1) the characteristics of this interactive online tool, “flipping the classroom”; 2) the cultural elements and intercultural communication theory included in the online tasks; 3) the specific tasks integrated into the enhanced course; 4) student response to the tasks and 5) the effectiveness of these tasks in developing students’ intercultural communication competence.

Key words: Chinese as a second language, culture, cultural pragmatics, intercultural communication, intercultural communicative competence, action research