



Western Culture Acquisition of Young Cadres Based on Cognitive Linguistics

Jing Shao

ABSTRACT

Language is not only the carrier and precipitation of culture, but also a part of culture. As the globalization progresses, the impact of western culture on our traditional culture of China, young cadres conform to the two definitions of youth and cadres and become the most vigorous, dreamful and creative group in the society, an important part of the cadres of the Party and the State, and the mainstay of the China's future and mission. Therefore, it is of strategic significance to study western culture acquisition of young cadres. This study explores the process of young cadres learning western culture based on cognitive linguistics, discusses the importance of language in cultural learning, expounds the three characteristics of cognitive linguistics: experience, motivation and metaphoricity, and puts forward some contributions of cognitive linguistics to cultural learning. This study analyzes the possible influence of western culture on young cadres and its ways, and puts forward the corresponding measures and preventive measures. Combined with the present situation of western culture acquisition, this study gives the methods and suggestions for young cadres to learn western culture based on cognitive language. Through language learning, they can deeply understand the western culture carried by language, and at the same time, they can more clearly recognize the traditional culture of China. This study also guides young cadres to establish correct values and world outlook in the process of western culture acquisition, to fully explore and learn about the profound cultural connotation and essence contained in language, and to enrich and nourish their own spiritual world.

Key Words: Cognitive Linguistics, Young Cadres, Western Culture, Cultural Acquisition

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Introduction

With the economic development, the globalization (Mueller, 1994) has infiltrated into many aspects of politics, economy, culture and others. Due to the deepening of China's reform and opening-up, a large number of foreign investment, overseas advanced management science and technology (Valley, 1998), and network consultation has also entered China, which has played a positive role in promoting China's economic development. At the same time, the western culture (Su *et al.*, 2006) also came to China, and exerts much stronger influence and impact on China's traditional culture (Wei, 2006) than any other time in history because of the development of technology and consultation.

The young generation, especially the young cadres, as an active and innovative generation, is more susceptible to the influence of modern western culture (James, 1988), which will have a profound influence on the world outlook, values and outlook on life of young cadres. Therefore, how to guide the youth and young cadres to correctly understand and learn western culture (Blackshire-Belay, 2001) is of great significance to the future development of China.

Culture is invisible and untouchable but really affects the individual action and cognition and determines the way that individuals view the world. Language is the accumulation and carrier

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of culture and a part of culture (Cohen, 2013). Language learning (Barac and Bialystok, 2012) can be regarded as the inheritance and exchange of culture. An important way for young cadres to learn western culture is to understand the western culture through language learning (Golonka *et al.*, 2014) based on cognitive linguistics (Hilton, 2011) and thus understand the traditional Chinese culture more clearly. Language is the recorder as well as the disseminator of culture. When people communicate with language, they will transform their ideas and innovations into language expressions. Therefore, it's helpful for young cadres to learn western culture, obtain world information (Ellis, 1993) and improve their communicative competence (Firth and Wagner, 2007) by mastering a foreign language (Dörnyei, 1998). However, it's necessary to go to its dross and get its essence in the process of absorbing western culture. This study explores the process of young cadres in learning western culture based on cognitive linguistics, discusses the importance of language in cultural learning, probes into the present situation, contents, existing problems and learning methods of western culture acquisition by young cadres, which is of positive significance for guiding our young cadres to form correct values and advance healthy development.

Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive linguistics

As a branch of linguistics, cognitive linguistics takes cognitive science as its theoretical background and involves theories of artificial intelligence, psychology, system theory, linguistics, etc. Cognitive linguistics is to seek the analogue of language imagination in general cognition. Cognitive linguists think that language competence is not independent but closely related to other cognitive mechanisms such as memory and attention. Different from other linguistic schools such as formal linguistics, cognitive linguistics highlights three characteristics of language: experience, motivation and metaphoricity, which are closely related to each other.

Characteristics of cognitive linguistics

(1) Experience

In cognitive linguistics, language is a kind of high-level thinking and cognition activity. When studying language, the people's perception and experience of social environment, culture and

emotion should be included, not just a simple study of grammar. In fact, much of the language in our life is related to our body or physical experience. For example, there are such phrases as shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand both in Chinese and English. Many studies have shown that the body may participate in the process of understanding language. For example, when two groups of experimenters are asked to watch the same painting with a road across a desolate land, one group hear that the road is flat with a smooth journey and the other group hear that the road is rough with a hard journey. The results show that the eyes of the participants in the flat-road group are moving faster than those of the other group, which shows that the human body is experiencing the described scene while understanding the written information.

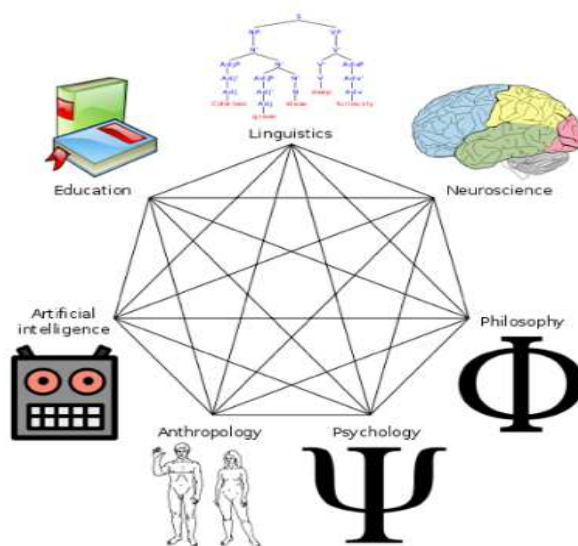


Figure 1. Cognitive linguistics

(2) Motivation

Cognitive linguistics differs from the general linguistics in that there is a logical relationship between the form and meaning of language, which is rational and substantiated, specifically divided into phonological motivation, semantic motivation and morphological motivation. Phonological motivation is expressed in the relationship between the pronunciation and the meaning of words, such as most onomatopoeic words like roar and tinkle in English and 稀里哗啦, 叮咚 and 滴答 in Chinese; semantic motivation of a word is gradually derived from its basic meaning or metonymy, such as a veil of mist, and as long as we understand the basic meaning of the



word and then it is not difficult to understand its extension; the last category is the morphological motivation of a word, understanding its meaning by analyzing its composition. For example, it is easy to infer the meaning of a word in English when its root is found.

(3) Metaphoricity

Metaphor is an important method for human to deal with abstract concepts. It is a cognitive means, not just a simple language problem. Humans use language to transform the experience of our physical perception into the way we can communicate, for example, when we are sad or sorrowful, our body often bends, and when we express positive emotions, the body is usually upright; such metaphors are also often seen in English expressions, such as cheer up is used to express happiness and feel down is used to express depression.

Due to the different social environment, political systems and so on, each nation has its own characteristics in the way and method of cognition, which can be reflected in the language metaphors of different nations. In China, for example, 雨后春笋 (bamboo shoots after a spring rain) is used to show how fast things are developing; but there is no such plant as bamboo shoot in British and American countries, so they use a mushroom to describe it. In general, the reasons for the metaphorical differences between Chinese and English are shown in Figure (2).

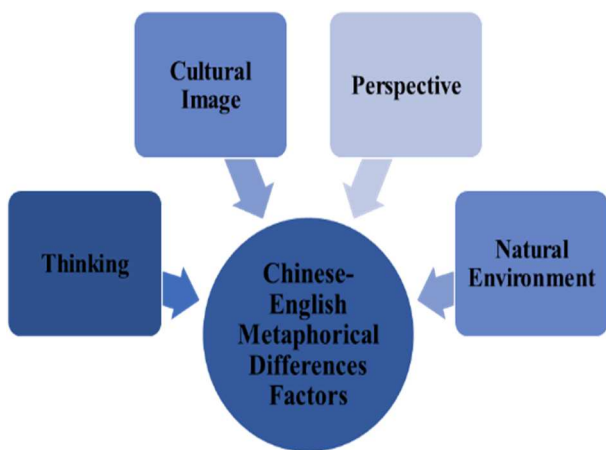


Figure 2. Factors that affect the chinese-english metaphoricity differences

Possible contributions of cognitive linguistics to cultural acquisition

Three characteristics of cognitive linguistics analyzed above are useful for young people to

learn from the learning of western culture, with main contributions as illustrated in Figure (3).

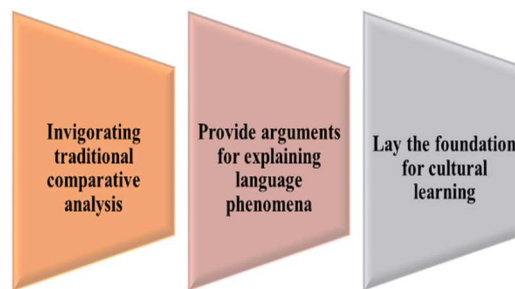


Figure 3. Possible contributions of cognitive linguistics

Study on Western Culture Acquisition of Young Cadres

Young cadres

Youth is an important period of life. It refers to a period of transiting from children to adults, during which a person gradually establishes and improves various social relations of self-independence. The youth is the most vigorous, dreamful and creative group in a society and the mainstay of the country's future and mission. Cadres refers to the staff engaged in economic, political, cultural and other affairs for the Party in a broad sense. Young cadres meet the definition of both youth and cadres, and they are an important part of the cadres of the Party and the State. Therefore, how to train and select young cadres is of great significance to the long-term strategic development of China.

Compared with the general cadres, the young cadres generally have the following characteristics: they have professional scientific and cultural level, excellent ideological and political quality, active work innovation ability and broad plastic development space. At the same time, the factors affecting the growth of young cadres are numerous, including personal internal factors and environmental external factors, summarized as shown in Figure (4) below.

Western culture

With the development of society, the degree of globalization is deepening day by day. Western countries rely on economic and technological advantages to export cultural output to China. The youth is active in thinking and strong in comprehension ability, so they are easy to be impacted by the foreign culture. Western culture mainly comes from Rome, Greece and Christianity, and these origins of these three civilizations tend to one direction in modern times. Although



western culture has a long history as Chinese culture, the influence of western culture on Chinese youth is double-sided, both positive and negative. Especially in recent years, the young people of China blindly adore and follow western culture, such as following foreign festivals and eating western food, but they ignore the study and inheritance of traditional culture of China, and even think that traditional culture of China has been outdated. These phenomena make us more aware of how to guide young people to correctly learn about and learn from the essence of western culture and establish correct world outlook, values and outlook on life.

Ways that western culture influences young cadres

It is undeniable that normal cultural exchanges between China and the Western countries are

conducive to promoting young cadres' cognition of cultural diversity, to opening up international experiments of young cadres, and to expanding the international influence of socialist ideology. However, the wanton invasion of western culture tends to cause the young cadres to feel close and identify with western culture but neglect the study and inheritance of Chinese traditional culture. In addition, the western culture has the characteristics of goal, concealment and extensiveness in the infiltration process, so young cadre should be more vigilant so that they can learn to distinguish the good or bad aspect of western culture, and take its essence and discard its dross. Western culture spreads and permeates mainly through the following four ways and means, as shown in Figure (5).

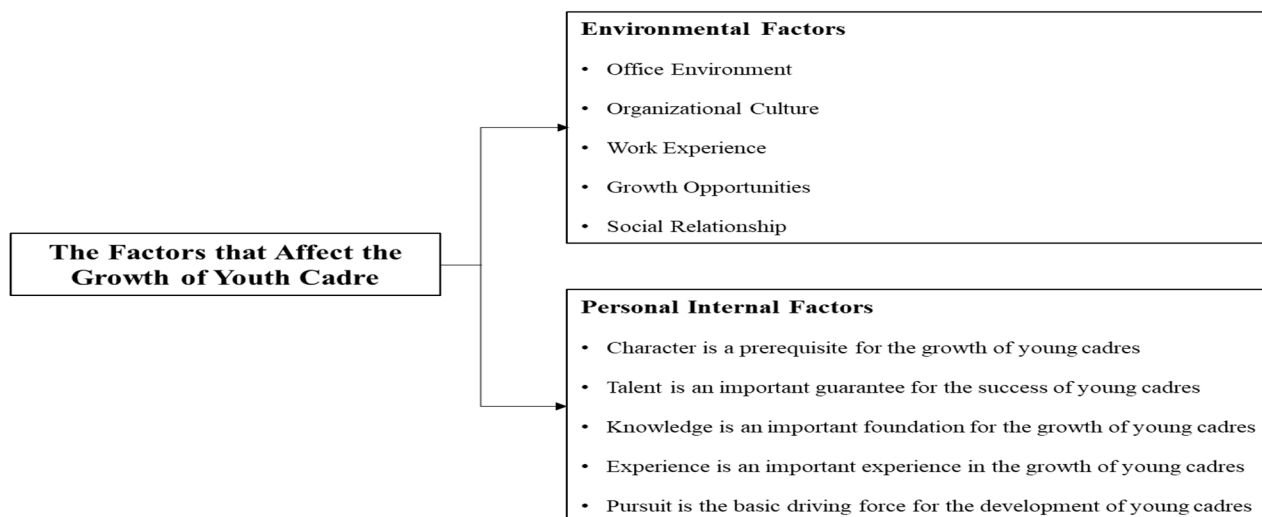


Figure 4. Factors that Affect the Growth of Youth Cadre



Figure 5. Western Cultural Infiltration Methods



Methods of Constructing Western Culture Acquisition Environment

Content of western culture acquisition

As far as culture is concerned, there is no fixed definition, but the connotation of culture can be defined from three aspects: material aspect;

political, economic, interpersonal relations and so on; and psychological aspect. The essence of culture lies in human being as well as communication. Where there is communication, there is culture. Language is not only the medium of communication, but also the accumulation of a nation's long-term life style, thinking habits and cultural habits. It reflects the culture of the whole nation. It is symbolic, national and systematic. It is one of the important means for human thinking and communication. Therefore, it is a good way for young cadres to learn western culture based on cognitive linguistics. Through the study of language knowledge, we can have a comprehensive and detailed understanding of western values, customs, beliefs and knowledge, because language is the carrier of culture, the accumulation of culture, as well as a part of culture. The famous linguist Byron proposed the cultural teaching model containing the following four basic elements, whose mutual correlation are shown in Figure (6).

Analysis and research on the current situation of western culture acquisition

Nowadays, the culture of the world presents a pluralistic state, especially in the west involving race issues, etc., and it is necessary to adopt an inclusive attitude towards the multiculturalism. The learning and study of western culture by young cadres is a kind of understanding and identification of the multiculturalism, which is helpful to cultivate the international vision of

young cadres, improve their cross-cultural awareness and enhance the ability to deal with cultural differences.

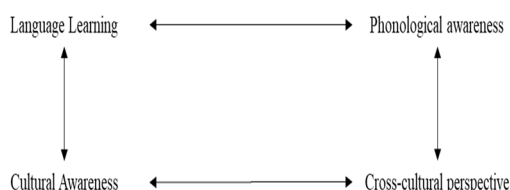


Figure 6. ICC culture teaching model

(1) Problems in western culture teaching and learning

Language is the carrier of culture. To learn western culture, it is necessary to have proficiency in language so as to understand and learn culture. Therefore, it is essential to study the present situation of foreign language learning. At present, lack of cultural infiltration in the content and method of foreign language teaching, language learning is only superficial, which shows in the following aspects:

2) Root of the problems in western culture teaching and learning

Language learning is a kind of cultural learning, but the common phenomenon in the current foreign language teaching in China affects young cadres' language learning, including teachers' imperfect accomplishment, the lack of Chinese traditional culture, and the situation that the quality education has not been fully promoted.

First of all, the traditional examination-oriented education in China has been deep-rooted. The learning is mainly aimed at examinations, and one-sided pursuit of high scores results in insufficient and superficial understanding of knowledge. The process of

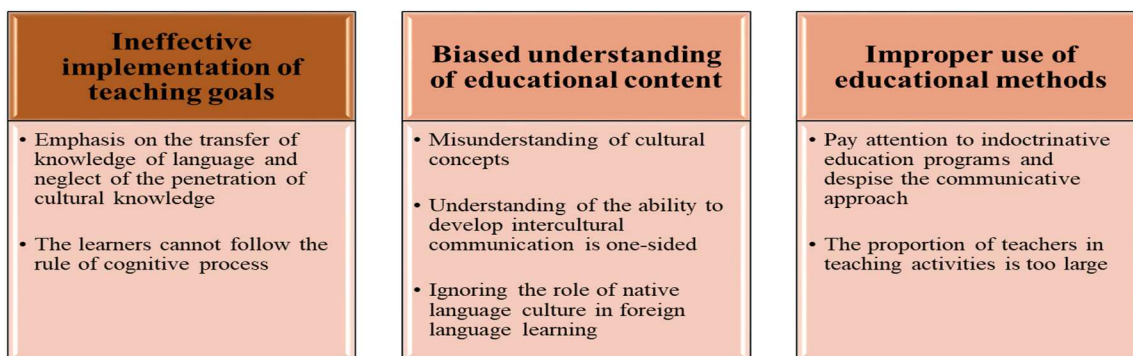


Figure 7. Current problems in western cultural teaching and learning



cognition is divided into three stages of perception, consolidation of memory and application, but the learning aimed at examination is based on memorizing instead of transforming it into the ability of application. Therefore, the popularization and practice of quality education are conducive to the development of the initiative of young cadres and the improvement of their ability in the process of learning western language.

Second, foreign language textbooks are filled with Western values and lack of Chinese traditional culture. Young cadres should strengthen the learning and edification of Chinese traditional culture in learning western culture, so as to avoid the risk of full westernization. Language is the carrier of culture. There may be conflicts with the ideas or values of Chinese traditional culture in studying western culture. But if we can establish the value orientation of Chinese traditional culture and contrast Chinese and western culture in learning English, it will be more beneficial to the study of western culture.

Finally, teachers are the subjects of knowledge dissemination and students are the subjects of receiving knowledge, so teachers' accomplishment and quality greatly affect the effect of teaching. At present, the cultural accomplishment of foreign language teachers in China also needs to be improved. At the same time, it is necessary to construct a new teaching view, in which the teacher-student relationship is equal and they should interact in the course of teaching. The essence of teaching and learning is "communication" and "cooperation", which can promote the creativity and variety of teaching activities and help students to learn knowledge actively.

Western cultural acquisition methods

Young cadres learn western culture essentially in order to absorb the excellent results of human culture, so it is not advisable to simply deny or stop opening to the outside world. We should take positive measures and adopt correct learning methods. Culture is not stationary. In the course of the communication and inheritance, it constantly absorbs and innovates, with a life cycle including occurrence, development and decline; the speed of change of western culture is more frequent and violent because of its special pursuit for novelty and difference. In the process of foreign language learning, we should not simply carry out language training, but pay more

attention to the cultivation of language and cultural functions, fully explore and realize the profound cultural connotation and essence contained in language, so as to absorb nutrients, and enrich and nourish our spiritual world.

The learning of language and culture is a gradual process, and for anyone, including young cadres, it is a process of adaptation. And in the time course of learning, it is proven that learning and adapting to new culture has obvious stages, as shown in Figure (8).



Figure 8. Different stages of cultural learning

Learning language and culture is a complementary process, and the premise of learning language is to understand western culture and society while mastering the background of western culture can help us to be more familiar with the use of language. We can increase the adaptability of language learning and cultivate the understanding of international culture from the following three aspects.

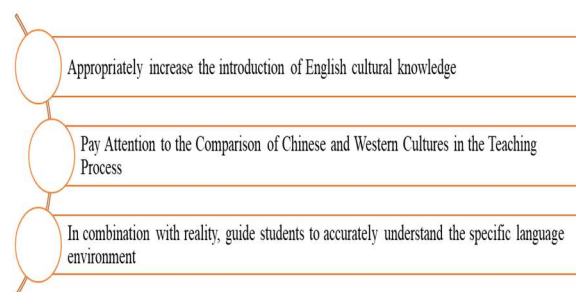


Figure 9. Methods of how to adapt to learning western culture

Measures to prevent the infiltration of western culture

In order to prevent that western countries affect the socialist ideology structure of China through culture infiltration, we should take corresponding measures and countermeasures to resist the wanton invasion of western culture, and take precautions from the follow aspects:

(1) From the aspect of cultural construction: first of all, we should strengthen the construction, education and dissemination of Chinese traditional culture to resist the impact of Western culture, recognize that Chinese



traditional culture is the soul of national independence and existence, the direction of the State and national development, and the root of young cadres' thought. Secondly, according to the present situation of China, we should develop the national cultural innovation system with Chinese characteristics.

(2) From the perspective of strengthening ideological construction, we should strengthen the ideological construction of young cadres, improve the scientific and standardized ideological training in an all-round way, and train positive "opinion leaders". With the development of technologies, culture communication is now heavily dependent on network. Therefore, it is an important measure to strengthen the supervision system of network culture and train the high-end technical talents of network culture development to prevent the invasion of western culture.

(3) From the perspective of strengthening the ideological security of young cadres, economic construction is the material base of ideological security, and the economic development of China is the powerful backing of cultural development. Therefore, it is helpful to develop economy vigorously and set up corresponding security barriers to the spread of western culture for resisting the infiltration of western culture.

Conclusions

This study explores the process of young cadres in learning western culture based on cognitive linguistics, discusses the importance of language in cultural learning, probes into the present situation, contents, existing problems and learning methods of western culture acquisition by young cadres, and draws the following conclusions:

(1) This study expounds the three characteristics of cognitive linguistics: experience, motivation and metaphor, and puts forward some contributions of cognitive linguistics to cultural learning, including injecting new vigor into traditional learning methods and providing an important theoretical basis for explaining linguistic phenomena.

(2) This study discusses some problems that young cadres face in learning western culture as active individuals accepting the western culture, deals with the possible influence of western culture on young cadres and the influencing ways, and puts forward

corresponding measures and preventive measures.

(3) Language, as the carrier of culture, is one of the important ways and methods to learn western culture. Combining with the present situation of western culture acquisition, this study gives the methods and suggestions for young cadres to learn western culture based on cognitive language, and guides them to set up correct values and world outlook in the process of western culture acquisition, fully explore and experience the deep cultural connotation and essence of language, and enrich and nourish our own spiritual world.

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