

Connotation, Significance, and Approach: International Chinese Language Education from the Perspective of Narrative Ethics

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Abstract:

International Chinese language education is both a way of cultural transmission and a narrative method, which can be used to convey knowledge, exchange ideas, and reshape the spirit by means of educational narratives in order to achieve the purpose of international understanding. This paper focuses on the connotation and significance of international Chinese language education from the perspective of narrative ethics as well as explores its ethical narrative problems based on three aspects: teachers, students, and classroom teaching, and suggests corresponding solutions. It aims to provide new theoretical and practical research perspectives for the development of international Chinese language education and help Chinese language education to be carried out more effectively in order to promote intercultural communication and integration.

Keywords:

International Chinese language education
Narrative ethics
Connotation
Meaning
Approach

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1. Introduction

The importance of international Chinese language education as an essential bridge for cultural dissemination and exchange is self-evident. With the continuous evolution of educational concepts and the in-depth development of multicultural exchanges, the perspective of narrative ethics provides a novel and in-depth research perspective for international Chinese language education. Narrative ethics focuses on individual life

stories and the ethical values behind them, emphasizing the transmission of cultural meaning and ethical concepts through narratives. In order to meet the needs and challenges of the times, it is of great theoretical value and practical significance to conduct in-depth research on the connotation, significance, and approach of international Chinese language education under the perspective of narrative ethics.

2. Connotation: Narrative content in international Chinese language education

Since the development of Chinese language education, academics and colleagues have been committed to exploring the applicable research paradigms and development paths. According to Kuhn, an American philosopher of science, the development of science depends on the revolutionary transformation of “paradigms” rather than gradual progress^[1]. Therefore, the continuous innovation of teaching research paradigms and perspectives is also driving the continuous development of education. The perspective from which teaching and learning should be viewed is usually closely related to the context of the times. Since the 1980s, Chinese language teaching has gone through three innovations, from “Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language” to “Chinese Language International Education” and to the current “International Chinese Language Education.” The change in the name of the discipline also means that the connotation and meaning of the discipline are constantly updated. Academics generally define international Chinese language education as the dissemination and inheritance of the Chinese language in the world. The responsibility and obligation of Chinese language education is not only limited to language education itself, but also includes the cultural ideas and stories behind the language, especially in today’s world situation, Chinese language education should have a global vision. In order to tell a good Chinese story, Chinese language education is an important means of communication.

As early as 1996, UNESCO put forward the concept of education with the aim of “international understanding,” aiming at enhancing the understanding and tolerance of all peoples in the world through education^[2]. According to Zhang and Hu, “international understanding” implies the interaction and understanding of the target country’s society, China’s society, and the international community, i.e., you, me, and others^[3]. Therefore, the connotation of education does not only lie in communication, but also in seeking mutual understanding and tolerance. From a narrative perspective, through language, people become narrators; and through language, education can become a narrative bridge that promotes the exchange and integration of

ideas from different cultures.

In addition to considering the requirements of the times and policy mechanisms at the macro level, it is also necessary to return to the front line of teaching, to understand the responsibilities of teachers, and to solve the problems of students. Zhu and Hao pointed out that “teachers, teaching methods, and teaching materials” are the three core issues of international Chinese language education^[4]. If education is regarded as a narrative method, then teachers and students are the main subjects in the narrative process and the teaching materials are like the scripts of the narratives that are carefully arranged. To rely on the teaching materials to carry out the educational narratives, it is necessary to give full play to the role of pedagogy. Among these three core issues, pedagogy is the most flexible, and teachers’ choice of pedagogy greatly affects the effect of educational narratives. It can be seen that international Chinese language education is both a means of communication and a narrative method.

3. Significance: The importance of narrative ethics in international Chinese language education

The classroom, as an important place for teaching and learning activities, is an indispensable part of the educational process. In fact, the process of teaching also involves the process of the teacher as a narrator. The difference is that a good classroom is not merely a simple description and explanation of the content by the teacher, but also the ideas, attitudes, and emotions conveyed by the teacher as a narrator. According to Li, the significance of educational narrative lies in the process of realizing the reconstruction of the narrator’s self-spiritual life by way of recounting educational events^[5]. That is to say, the connection between practical science and thought experience is constructed, knowledge is transmitted, ideas are exchanged, and the spirit is remodeled by means of educational narratives.

As early as in the ancient Greek period, the philosopher Aristotle proposed that a good narrative should have ethical values. Similarly, international Chinese language education narratives can only reflect the real meaning of education if they have certain ethical values and missions. In cross-cultural communication,

guiding students to establish life goals, find value pursuits, and realize spiritual remodeling is an important task of the international Chinese education narrative.

A good educational narrative should have the following characteristics: human-centered, creative, two-way, equal, and multifaceted. From a human-centered perspective, education focuses on individual needs, dilemmas, and growth. In the process of educational narrative, it is necessary to tap the creativity of individuals, put knowledge into practice effectively, and then transform the practical experience into the spiritual power that belongs to a certain individual, realizing their spiritual remodeling. Teaching is never a single perspective, but a two-way process of “teaching” and “learning.” The process of educational narrative is not only a two-way transformation of the roles of the narrator and the listener, but also a mutual resonance between the two from the spiritual soul. In the course of life filled with stories, everyone is the narrator of their own life story as well as the listener of other people’s life stories, and the significance of educational narratives is to give everyone the right to choose their own life role on an equal footing. At the same time, educational narratives should be inclusive, rich, multifaceted, and possess endless possibilities, to avoid overly simplified black-and-white education.

If the individual is regarded as the center of a circle, then the educational narrative is the process of discovering, creating, and reshaping the self in an all-round way through the two-way interaction between teachers and students on an equal footing, so as to correctly establish the individual’s ethical beliefs and guide their life practices. In a cross-cultural context, how to allow students to obtain unlimited growth and development based on association and their own experiences through the Chinese context is the important purpose and meaning of Chinese language education.

4. Approach: Practical exploration of ethical narratives in international Chinese language education

4.1. Ethical narratives in teachers’ instruction

International Chinese language teachers face many ethical challenges in the teaching process. Firstly, due

to differences in cultural backgrounds, students from different countries and regions have varying values and behavioral norms, and their understanding of different ethical concepts also differs, which brings certain difficulties to teachers’ teaching and management. Secondly, teachers may also face problems when choosing the content of ethical narratives. Therefore, if teachers select the content of educational narratives on a certain topic without in-depth understanding and consideration, it may cause conflicts due to cultural differences. In addition, teachers are under pressure for their own professional development. With the changes in the world landscape and external environment, international Chinese language education models and concepts have seen new developments, which also means higher demands on teachers’ professionalism and teaching abilities.

First of all, with regard to the issue of cultural differences, it is important to adopt a multifaceted narrative approach based on cultural contrasts. A single cultural comparison is just a superficial exchange of words, and only by giving students a platform for free expression can cultural integration be truly realized. For example, teachers can organize activities like “cultural reservoir,” allowing students to show their own country’s cultural characteristics and the integration and collision of the Chinese language. Multiple narratives not only enable students to understand the diversity of Chinese language learning in different cultural contexts, but also allow teachers to draw new inspirations from them to enrich the existing teaching contents and methods.

Secondly, concerning the selection of the content of ethical narratives, it is important to note that culture is not a “point” but a “surface.” Teachers and students can co-construct an understanding of Chinese culture and its ethical concepts through two-way educational narratives, and jointly explore the values and connotations of different cultures in the interchange of the roles of narrator and listener. This kind of interaction not only helps students to better understand Chinese, but also helps teachers to better understand the cultural background and cognitive characteristics of their students, thus realizing the mutual benefit of teaching and learning.

Finally, regarding teachers’ personal career development, it is important to focus on teachers’ self-

growth as well as the external environment and subject needs. On the one hand, teachers need to continuously improve their professionalism and teaching ability to adapt to the constantly developing and innovative teaching mode; on the other hand, they also need to clarify their own career development orientation, deeply understand the connotation and meaning of international Chinese language education, and be a good narrator of Chinese language education.

4.2. Ethical narratives in student learning

Students also face many ethical narrative problems when learning Chinese. First of all, students may face differences in narrative understanding. For example, for some international students from more individualistic cultural backgrounds, it is difficult to understand the complex social and ethical relationships carried by the Chinese word “人情.” Secondly, the knowledge that students are exposed to is often presented in the form of “being revealed,” and it is difficult to show the creativity of knowledge. The currently advocated flipped classroom has obvious advantages in flexibility and interactivity, but at the same time, the technical requirements for teachers and students, as well as students’ learning autonomy are higher. If students do not have the appropriate equipment or lack awareness and ability to learn independently, it may affect the effectiveness of classroom teaching. When it is difficult for students to discover knowledge on their own, it will be more difficult to realize the creativity of knowledge. Finally, it is difficult for students to transform “education on paper” into “education in life.” When teaching becomes a fixed mode, it is challenging for students to put their real feelings into it, and when students aim at accomplishing a certain task or project requirement, it defeats the original purpose of teaching based on practice. Therefore, it is difficult to arouse students’ emotional resonance by relying only on a fixed mode of teaching and learning.

In order to cope with the dilemma of ethical narratives, it is necessary to be “student-centered” and realize a successful closure of educational narratives. First of all, regarding the problem of differences in narrative understanding, it is necessary to help students understand the world through stories by means of narratives. Stories are the carriers of human experience and provide us

with a structured way to make sense of the world. In international Chinese language education, a vivid and short story is sometimes much more powerful than a verbal explanation. Not only is it an important way for people to convey values, knowledge, and emotions, but it can also help people construct their self-perceptions and thus stimulate deep emotional resonance. Despite the different cultural backgrounds and experiences among individuals, the associative and transmitting effects of stories can still help students establish links with different cultures, thus deepening their understanding of different cultural connotations and ethical concepts.

Secondly, as far as the presentation of knowledge is concerned, less rewriting of experience and more self-experiencing of the true state of being can truly realize the creativity of knowledge. Experience rewriting is a kind of repetitive behavior based on past cognitive frameworks and behavioral patterns. Self-experience, on the other hand, emphasizes individual feelings, experiences, and reflections. Only through active participation in the process of acquiring and exploring knowledge, and the connection between existing knowledge and their own life experiences, can students discover the value of knowledge, guide their self-development, and truly realize the creativity of knowledge.

Finally, in order to truly realize “education in life,” a life-based educational narrative is indispensable. Telling interesting and ethical Chinese stories can stimulate students’ interest and enthusiasm in learning Chinese and help them build their own identity. The value of narratives lies not only in sharing but also in thinking and feeling. In a Chinese language learning environment, ethical narratives can help students construct an understanding of and identity with Chinese culture. Students can also construct their identity as Chinese language learners through the narratives of their own life experiences. Through intercultural exchanges and integration, students are able to construct cross-cultural identities. In this process, teachers should play a good role in guiding students to realize that Chinese language learning is not only about language learning, but also about communicating and practicing the philosophy of life.

4.3. Ethical narratives in the classroom teaching

The ethical narratives faced in international Chinese

classroom teaching include not only the various linguistic elements and language skills of the Chinese language, but also the rich cultural connotations and ethical concepts of the Chinese language, and the teaching based on the latter is still in need of further depth. From a macro point of view, the Chinese language is characterized by a long history, strong continuity, and heavy ideology, which are precisely the difficulties for students to learn. Therefore, if we can explore practical teaching strategies from a narrative perspective, it may be able to promote the further development of ethical narratives in international Chinese classroom teaching.

For example, Chinese sayings and idioms can be a good breakthrough. With their simple forms and profound meanings, they carry rich cultural memories and ethical connotations and are also able to vividly express complex thoughts and emotions. However, the teaching of sayings and idioms still faces some challenges in international Chinese language education. On the one hand, due to their complex semantics, they are difficult for non-native learners to understand and master. On the other hand, the current teaching methods and textbooks contain relatively little content on sayings and idioms, which lacks systematicity and relevance. Teaching also mostly stays at the level of semantics and utilization, seldom involving cultural connotations and ethical concepts.

Based on this, how to help students deeply understand the cultural connotations and ethical concepts of the Chinese language and obtain self-growth and remodeling is the important purpose and significance of international Chinese language classroom teaching. First of all, it is necessary to focus on systematic teaching design. The scattered language knowledge can be categorized and taught according to the theme, which can be taught as a whole topic, or distributed in each lesson as one of the links of classroom teaching. Taking the teaching of idioms as an example, it can be categorized into emotion, such as “怒发冲冠”; animal, such as “画龙点睛” and so on. By teaching thematic categorization, students can learn idioms in a more systematic way and improve their learning efficiency. At the same time, it will also deepen students’ understanding of Chinese expressions and Chinese ways of thinking.

Secondly, cultural understanding can be deepened through narrative teaching, and cultural understanding

can be used to promote emotional resonance. Narrative teaching can deepen students’ understanding of Chinese culture and ideology. For example, by telling the story of “Chang’e Flying to the Moon,” students can learn about the Mid-Autumn Festival, feel the romantic imagination of the ancient Chinese people about the universe, and realize the importance of the “family” culture in Chinese ethical concepts. Cultural understanding is a bridge to build emotional resonance, and in the exchange of different cultures, understanding can be enhanced to stimulate students’ emotional identity and resonance.

Thirdly, it is important to focus on personal authentic emotional experience. In the international Chinese classroom, teachers not only have to improve their professionalism and teaching methods, but also their responsibility and mission as an educational narrator. While possessing the identity of a teacher, first of all, they should not forget their own emotions and values as an independent individual. Based on “less broad assumptions, more individual depth,” they give students adequate space for expression, in order to promote the diversity of their knowledge and understanding.

Finally, it is necessary to help students to de-label and explore the meaning of life growth in classroom teaching. In an open and inclusive classroom atmosphere, teachers establish equal rules with students, clarify that everyone’s viewpoints and experiences deserve to be honored, and give students enough comfortable space to express their unique insights into growth. Whether teacher or student, everyone in the classroom is a narrator of their own life and a listener to the life experiences of others. Through rich life stories, students can learn that growth is a complex and individualized process, and there is no fixed label. In addition, diverse teaching methods can be utilized such as the case study-based method. Teachers provide a wide variety of growth cases related to the content of the curriculum, guide students to view and solve problems from different perspectives, and appreciate the complexity and diversity of growth.

Classroom teaching involves not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the shaping of values and the cultivation of personality. Through educational narratives, cultural connotations and ethical concepts can be skillfully integrated into the teaching process, so that students can realize self-development and spiritual

remodeling in a subtle way.

5. Conclusion

International Chinese language education is a critical bridge for cultural exchange and dissemination, as well as an effective educational practice and narrative. The Chinese language can be used as a carrier to convey knowledge, communicate ideas, and reshape the spirit through educational narratives, realizing the true meaning of knowledge dissemination and cultural understanding. In today's world, discussing international Chinese language education from the perspective of narrative ethics is conducive to breaking down cultural barriers at a deeper level and enhancing international

students' understanding of Chinese cultural connotations and ethical concepts. It also plays a positive role in maintaining cultural diversity and building a harmonious and coexisting international cultural environment. Ethical narratives enrich the connotation of education and inject emotion and humanistic care into classroom teaching. While pursuing the answer to reality, we also need to find the answer to growth in life, which is exactly the meaning of education. By exploring the ways of practicing ethical narratives in international Chinese language education, it is expected to provide new ideas for international Chinese language education and its research in the future, as well as to inject continuous vitality and vigor into helping global cultural exchanges.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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