



COMMENT ON “IMPACT OF COLLEGE ENGLISH EDUCATION THOUGHTS ON ENHANCING NATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY”


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COMMENT ON “IMPACT OF COLLEGE ENGLISH EDUCATION THOUGHTS ON ENHANCING NATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY”

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Liang (2024) aims at proposing the English education as the tool that can be used to advance the country’s cultural agenda, though usually associated with the promotion of English language and culture. Thus, Liang (2024) considers arguments presented in the article and compare them to other publications, explain some issues that were not addressed by the author, and provide some critical points.

While Liang presents a solid argument on why and how cultural education should be included in the English curriculum, he oversimplifies the concept of identity formation. Thus, cultural identity involves factors like family, media, peer relations, and experience, which have not been discussed in the article. Although education is crucial and has been stressed in the present research, it explains only a certain facet of the process of identity construction.

The relationship between language education and culture, as a concept, has been discussed by many writers. According to the article by Kramersch (1998) titled “*Language and Culture*,” the focus of language teaching should be on developing critical awareness of culture. Kramersch argues that the acquisition of a second language should be a thinking activity relative to the cultures of both the source and the target language. This opinion aligns with the article’s argument that, while cultural knowledge should be taught alongside English, it should be taught more critically. Byram (1997) in the article “Teaching and Assessing Intercultural

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Communicative Competence” defines intercultural competence as a person’s capacity to interpret the cultures and respond to them. According to Byram, language education ought to prepare learners for intercultural communication and negotiation. While this approach does not focus on the given article’s concern of building national identity, it stresses the idea of connecting the global with the national in language education.

Several critical questions arise from the article’s propositions:

(1) In what ways can teachers meet the need to instill national cultural values while teaching English, a language that is by default international?

The task is to develop curricula that help students become strong patriots and cosmopolitans at the same time. Including content that refers to the cultural values of a particular country and educating students about different cultures could be helpful in this regard.

(2) How can culture be taught in English language curricula without prejudicing the students through reinforcement of cultural biases?

Some of the strategies could entail the incorporation of actual cultural artifacts, integrated subject approaches and dialogue that would make students evaluate culture. Teachers should be equipped with engaging learners in such discussions while encouraging them to be empathetic and rational.

(3) In what ways can the cultural differences and experiences of students be incorporated into the concept of the national cultural education system?

The cultural differences that are present in the classroom must be acknowledged and appreciated. Culturally congruent curricula that permit integration of the students’ cultural background and views can enhance general learning. These questions question the daily use and applicability of the author’s recommendations for curriculum development and delivery.

However, Liang lacks coverage of one crucial aspect, and that is the impact of digital media on cultural identity. In the current society, there are various types of digital media in use and the extent to which students engage in such media determines their cultural identity. With the help of media, learners get a chance to receive cultural information from different parts of the world, thus enriching their cultural experience. Further, as Canagarajah underlined (2012), by integrating digital literacy into the learning of English, it is possible to guarantee the formation of new kinds of cultural literacy, making students critical and active users of information found online. They also encourage the creation and dissemination of cultural goods, which allows students to participate in cultural creation and distribution. Therefore, the integration of digital media in the teaching and learning of English assists the

students in developing their cultural selves as they are equipped with the tools for navigating the digital cultural world (Gao, 2021, p. 551).

Liang also has a limited view of the culture, believing that culture should be attributed to the nation only, however, he could have devoted more attention to global culture as well. As the world gets smaller due to globalization, students ought to learn about their own culture as well as the cultures of the rest of world. Byram (1997) noted that intercultural communication and global cultural studies can be a way of achieving this dual focus in the English curriculum. This helps in developing students’ national culture as well as enabling them to learn about other cultures and the global culture in general. In the context of English education, the concept of the cultural hybrid holds a different value. Cultural transnationality is a process whereby two or more cultures are merged in one social context to form another culture. This is especially so for students who come across various cultures while learning the English language (Bhabha, 2012). Hence, when educators support cultural transculturation, the environment that will be produced is less rigid and dogmatic and represents the complexity and constant change of culture. Based on the analysis, the following recommendations can be made for the integration of culture into college English programs: First of all, the curriculum has to reflect cultural components of national and global nature to promote the integration of cultural self-identity. These two strategies help the students develop an understanding of their own culture while exposing them to a number of cultures around the world. Secondly, the promotion of digital literacy is very crucial in the incorporation of English education. This is because, to critically consume and interact with the available cultural products online, the students will be able to do it effectively. Thirdly, there is a need to integrate intercultural communication training to the English programs. This training will assist the students to learn cultural sensitivity as it will assist them to appreciate the cultural differences around the world (Byram, 1997). Finally, it is essential to provide professional development for educators, as they need further preparation to interact with students. Therefore, the implementation of right approaches in training teachers in ways of teaching culture will improve the realization of the recommendations made.

Therefore, while Liang presents valuable considerations concerning the effects of college English education thought on the promotion of national cultural identity, it is regrettable that his perception of cultural identity is somewhat constricted. Thus, with the help of the integration of theoretical concepts of intercultural competence, cultural hybridity and digital culture, the language educators can establish an enhanced and integrated model for language education. This broader framework, not only, highlights the cultural values of the society, but also prepares the students to confront the challenges of a global village.

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