# Chapter 51
# Developing Intercultural Awareness Within Teacher Preparation Program

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## ABSTRACT

*As more expatriate Chinese language teachers are recruited to teach in American K-12 schools, there is an increasing need for American university teacher preparation programs to address the challenges they are experiencing, as well as how they should cope. With years' experience and a uniquely cross-cultural breadth, this book chapter first examines the cultural differences between the U.S. and China in classroom management, class communication, teaching styles and instructional strategies. To identify the cross-cultural teaching difficulties, as well as the situational and cultural factors that impact the failure of teaching in cross-cultural situations, literature was then reviewed from the fields of teaching Chinese as a foreign language and cross-cultural Chinese language teaching. Last, employing Byram's intercultural competence model, this book chapter suggests ways in which intercultural awareness and intercultural competence be incorporated in higher education foreign language teacher preparation programs in the U.S.*

## INTRODUCTION

The past decade has witnessed a steadfast boom in the learning of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) in the U.S. According to a report from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, in 2005, there were 20,000 students learning Chinese in K-12 American public schools, and the number had tripled by 2008. This demand has brought many Chinese language teachers into American K-12 schools (College Board, 2013). For instance, the College Board alone has brought more than 1,000 Chinese language and culture teachers to classrooms across the U.S. since 2007. These teachers are called expatriate Chinese language teachers.

Although recruiting expatriate Chinese language teachers to teach in the U.S. has solved the problem of teacher shortage, it may result in the problem of cultural clashes when they bring with them their home cultural practices, past educational and work experiences, and perspectives on how to teach Chinese (Zhou & Li, 2015a). While these teachers may have received extensive second language teaching training in theory back in China; however, they receive little training in intercultural awareness in instructional strategies, classroom management, and how to apply these skills to their Chinese language teaching in the cross-cultural contexts. As a result, they may find that teaching in American schools is quite different from what they have experienced and accustomed to in China. These differences make their classroom teaching and management effectiveness much more elusive to achieve (Hanson, 2013; Liu, 2003; Xu, 2012; Zhou, 2013; Zhou & Li, 2015c).

Educators have long understood that "recognizing cultural differences and making adjustments accordingly to achieve good instruction is essential to successful cross-cultural language teaching (Zhou & Li, 2015c, p. 213)." The more different the host and home cultures are, the more important it is for expatriate teachers to possess intercultural awareness about differences and develop intercultural competence in dealing with any mishaps that may occur in their teaching practices. These are critical to cross-cultural teaching which requires close interactions between them and students, parents, and colleagues from the host culture as well as the ability to modify instructional strategies to accommodate cultural differences and engage students in foreign language learning.

Despite the growing awareness among educators about the need to improve expatriate foreign language teachers' intercultural awareness, unfortunately, existing American universities and teacher preparation programs normally do not pay enough attention to the role of culture, thus do not commonly address this topic in the curriculum (Henry & Costantino, 2015; Wang, 2002). Typical foreign language programs include topics like language teaching methods and curriculum development, but there is no direct emphasis on cultural differences and how to deal with them. Pre-service teacher training provided to expatriate teachers tends to be ignorant of cultural differences. Even if the topic of cultural differences is covered, it is overly simplistic, stereotypical and superficial with a list of dos and don'ts without explicitly explaining any specifics or contexts. This often results in their poor understanding or misunderstanding of the host culture and unpreparedness for instructional challenges in their cross-cultural teaching. To reduce potential cultural clashes, it is imperative that higher education institutions in the U.S. address the problem by including intercultural awareness in foreign language teacher training programs to improve teachers' cross-cultural knowledge and competence.

This book chapter attempts to fill in the gap by achieving two major goals. First, it is designed to explore and define the relationship between intercultural awareness, intercultural competence, cross-cultural Chinese language teaching, and expatriate Chinese language teacher training. Built on the first purpose, the second goal is to introduce and describe ways in which intercultural awareness and intercultural competence were incorporated in a higher education foreign language teacher preparation program. This chapter will start from a discussion on the importance of the two concepts in cross-cultural foreign language teaching. Then some differences in teaching and learning between the American and Chinese education systems are examined, and main intercultural competence necessary to teach in cross-cultural contexts are identified. Following that, this chapter will review current research on expatriate Chinese language teachers' cross-cultural teaching experiences. Last, it will describe and discuss how to improve their intercultural awareness and competence in higher education teacher preparation programs.

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