

The Self – identification and Social Identification of Chinese Immigrants in Australia

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[Abstract] In the recent wave of immigration, Australia is winning more and more favor. However, some immigrants, especially those from distinctive cultures, tend to be confronted with the problem of how to identify themselves in the new community. This paper is aimed at exploring this problem by analyzing the history and the status quo of the Chinese immigrants and put forward some advice for the new immigrants.

[Key words] Chinese immigrant, Australia, identification

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According to the figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), almost 6 million migrants, born in over 200 countries, live in Australia. 27% of Australia's resident population were born overseas.

People born in the United Kingdom continued to be the largest group of overseas – born residents, accounting for 1.2 million people. The next largest group was born in New Zealand with 544 000 people, followed by China (380 000 people), India (341 000) and Italy (216 000). During the decade starting from 2000, the proportion of those born in China has increased from 0.8% to 1.7%. Australia is winning more and more favor from Chinese potential immigrants. However, some immigrants, especially those from distinctive cultural backgrounds, tend to be confronted with the problem of how to identify themselves in the new community. Finding their identity and being recognised has always been a challenge that overseas Chinese have to face.

I. The History of Chinese Immigrants to Australia

The time of the first group of recorded Chinese immigrants dated back to 1750 who conducted business to Australia, but in fact the history could be much longer. Around 1850, more and more Chinese began to flow to Australia in large numbers in search of opportunities during the gold rush.

Competition in the goldfields, labour disputes and Australian nationalism created an environment of racial antagonism during the second half of the 19th century. Such factors led to the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901, one of the first Acts of the national parliament following federation. The passage of this bill is considered the commencement of the White Australia Policy. Subsequent acts further strengthened the policy up to the start of World War II. These policies effectively allowed for the privileging of British migrants over all others through the first decades of the 20th century, and the number of Chinese im-

migrants thus shrank from 0.78% of the Australian population to 0.12%.

The policy was dismantled in stages by several successive governments after the conclusion of World War II, with the encouragement of first non – British and later non – white immigration, allowing for a large multi – ethnic post – war program of immigration. The Menzies and Holt Governments effectively dismantled the policies between 1949 and 1966 and the Whitlam Government passed laws to ensure that race would be totally disregarded as a component for immigration to Australia in 1973. In 1975 the Whitlam Government passed the Racial Discrimination Act, which made racially – based selection criteria illegal.

During the 1970s, millions of immigrants arrived in Australia, which resulted in the issue of the multiculturalism policy, where “each ethnic group desiring it, is permitted to create its own cultural heritage indefinitely, while taking part in the general life of the nation”.

The new Chinese immigrant wave appeared around 1990 when the policy of multiculturalism was established as a basic national policy by the Australian government. Around forty thousand Chinese obtained Australian citizenship and since then the number of Chinese immigrants keeps mounting in the next two decades, constituting the third largest group of overseas – born residents.

II. Motivations for Moving to Australia

The majority (76%) of overseas – born residents in Australia were of working age, 15 ~ 64 years at June 2010. Migrants born in Asia, America and Africa had proportionally larger young (0 ~ 14 years) and working age (15 ~ 64 years) populations compared to those from Europe.

The major direct motivation for immigration is to improve the living standard by finding a new means of pay rise. As a medium

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advanced country , Australia appears fairly appealing to most Chinese immigrants. On the other hand , the growth of international immigrants results not only from the globalisation of the economy but also from the development of the world labor market. Known for its vast territory and sparse population , Australia has been in need of labor force since the discovery of the gold mines while China , with its large population , has been dispatching people to Australia from the gold rush era. After the Second World War , the fast development of the economy calls for a large work force , especially skilled workers. The Australian government keeps revising its immigrant policies by adjusting the ratio and quota of skilled workers so as to satisfy the need of its work market.

III. Occupations that Chinese Immigrants Take to

Merge into the Society

Different Chinese immigrant groups are distributed in various social areas and get merged into the mainstream society by distinctive means. In the early settlement of the nineteenth century , most Chinese labored in the mine pits. According the census of 1911 , Chinese immigrants were spread in almost all occupations , including technical jobs , housekeeping , business , transportation , agriculture , etc. Nevertheless , these immigrants were not evenly distributed , but rather , they concentrated on some “appropriate” occupations , which acted as supplements instead of competition to those posts held by the “host” social members. A large percentage (35%) of the Chinese immigrants grew fruits or vegetables , accounting for almost half of the population in this industry.

With the dismantlement of the “White Australia” policy and the implementation of the multicultural policy , there was a change in the number and post of the Chinese practitioners , among whom an obvious distinction appeared between the practitioners from China’s mainland and those from Hong Kong and Taiwan. In the 1980s , most of the immigrants from China’s mainland were students who could only find some blue – collar jobs due to their limited language proficiency. In 1996 , one fourth of them worked as ordinary workers and about one fifth served in the restaurants run by local Chinese. By contrast , according to the same survey , one third of the immigrants from Hong Kong were occupied in skilled or half skilled occupations , such as accounting , computer or business and those from Taiwan found employment in management.

However , things changed after 1996 as a result of the fast growth of China’s economy and technology as well as the modification of the policy on skilled immigration during the Howard government. The Chinese Australians were no longer confined to the so – called Chinese occupational circle (i. e. restaurant , peddlery and tea farming) and began to penetrate into the Australian occupational circle as professionals. By the year 2001 , over half the immigrants from China’s mainland pursued some skilled professions such as scientific research , engineering , higher education , health care , computer and business. By contrast , more and more people migrated from Hong Kong and Taiwan as investors , entering such diversified industries as manufacturing , trade , catering , real estate and electronics on a global scale.

IV. Difficulties in Getting Self – identification and Social Identification

As a matter of fact , the Chinese immigrants , especially those from China’s mainland , have undergone a hard time in merging into the new society , experiencing a mixture of vulnerability , desperation , rage , fear , prejudice and ambition. They have difficulty in positioning their migrant identity and locating themselves within those discourses of acceptability.

One obstacle lies in the immigrants’ adaptation to the new environment. This is because one has a natural tendency in identifying the environment in which he grows up. Once he is transplanted like a tree to a new environment in the course of his cultural identification , he will reject it by instinct , which may lead to some conflicts with the local residents. Since the newly arrived ethnic group has to accept the alien culture and living habits of the new community as well as the governing of a different race in order to make a living , it is rather difficult for the immigrants to preserve their tradition. As a result , the unique features of their Chineseness tend to be gradually weakened and assimilated by the dominant group.

From the perspective of the native groups , it is no easier to accept and recognize the migrant Chinese owing to the considerable differences in culture. They may perceive the Chinese immigrants as weakening their economic opportunities and draw upon stereotypes in forming these views. Therefore , the Chinese immigrants may encounter anti – immigrant hostility or even racism when they arrived. The implementation of the “White Australia” policy is a good case in point. As a result , the population of the Chinese immigrants declined dramatically from 1901 to 1947.

In response , various immigrant groups are inclined to isolate themselves to defend the possible persecution , which in turn widens the gap between the immigrants and the local Australians and has a negative impact on the immigrant’s self – identification and social identification. The China towns that are established in major Australian cities are a typical reflection of the cultural clashes and the immigrants’ quest for identification. In their real life , many Chinese immigrants are more willing to interact with people of the same race. Even when they enter the middle class , their experience in childhood has an everlasting influence on their outlooks and is likely to be reflected in the upbringing of their own children. For example , most Chinese parents prefer their children to interact with and marry Chinese. Hence , the cases of intermarriage between Chinese immigrants and Australians or other ethnic groups can be rarely found.

Another factor that affects their integration into the mainstream society lies in the depth of the role that traditional Chinese culture had played in their lives. Confucianism was an essential ingredient of the culture that made early immigrants what they were. In their eyes , China is old and crowded , burdened with history while Australia is new , open and ahistorical. Many Chinese immigrants refer to Australians as devils (guizi) or foreign devils (yang guizi) or used the slightly more polite form “foreigners” (laowai or waiguoren) . They seem oblivious to the fact that in Australia , they may be the ones considered to be foreigners. This cultural conceit also seems to explain why Australians construct a stereotypical schema.

Because of the problems arising from cultural identification , cultural threats become a common phenomenon in the immigrant society. Even though the immigrants get along with the native

groups, clashes remain unavoidable. Generally, the clashes may be divided into three levels. The first level is the clash between the immigrants and the local residents, which is discussed above. The second level refers to the clash between "old" and "new" immigrants. They do not mean different generations but mean the time when they move to Australia. The third level lies in the clash within the immigrants' inner selves. The humble jobs plus a drop in their social status generate within themselves a sense of loss so that they may even think of backing out. All these clashes make it harder for Chinese immigrants to identify themselves in the Australian communities.

V. Approaches to Seeking Self-identification and Social Identification

5.1 Be conscious of the trend in immigrant policies

It is believed that the immigrant policies of the country of destination usually overweigh those of the country of origin. As to Australia, its immigrant policies keep adjusting in accordance with its domestic affairs, economic factors and diplomatic strategies. The Chinese immigrants should keep informed of the trend in these policies in order to get a big picture of their living environment.

First of all, multiculturalism will continue to be the basic and main trend of Australian immigrant policies, which guarantee the rights of immigrants within mainstream Australia to express their cultural identity. Second, the immigrant selection criteria put a greater emphasis on the immigrant's economic factors, resulting in the rising need of skilled immigrants. From this perspective, Australian immigrant policies will remain relatively constant so as to promote Australia's economic development. Third, the immigrant policies will continue to conform to Australia's diplomatic policies, which attach importance to the Asia-Pacific region, enhance the economic ties with Asian countries and encourage immigration from Asian countries. Fourth, with the perfection of the immigrant legal system, the multicultural policy has been established in the immigrant policy which will undoubtedly minimize the subjective factor in the formulation of future policies.

5.2 Build up the immigrants' ability and make the most of their advantages

A good position in the society is the one that exerts the immigrant's ability, so different groups of Chinese immigrants should make full use of their abilities. Most immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan share similar educational background with Australians and are familiar with the western political and economic systems. Therefore, they are more likely to feel at home in such positions as civil servant, lawyer, and doctor. Another special group of Chinese immigrants are those from Yaomin of China's south Guangdong province. Despite their short knowledge on the foreign language and social system, they are not short of public and government attention, for they produce a large proportion of the vegetables that people need every day.

5.3 Participate in and discuss government and political affairs to get more association with the mainstream society

Most of the Chinese new immigrants are equipped with excellent technical knowledge, which will surely enhance their awareness of participating in government and political affairs, and achieve better result. This group of people constitutes the

nucleus of the Chinese immigrants in the mainstream society. One remarkable representative is Henry Tsang who was supported by the Chinese from all walks of life and was elected as the deputy mayor of Sydney in 1991.

Another factor that draws attention of the minority groups to Australian politics is the voting system that compulsorily demands all voters to register and participate. The identification of the mainstream society in this process makes the Chinese immigrants more active participants in politics.

To succeed in political participation, the Chinese Australians should join hands in certain groups or parties. By actively participating in local affairs and social activities, the Chinese immigrants are able to interact and get more familiar with more Australians and the society. The outstanding representatives can then speak for the general Chinese Australians and enhance their social status.

5.4 Foster the traditional Chinese culture

Chinese Australians should try to preserve and publicise the essence of the traditional Chinese culture through newspapers, education and mass organisations. Chinese newspapers, such as Sing Tao Daily and Australia Chinese Daily, are playing increasingly important roles in publicising traditional Chinese cultures to the Australian public, hence promoting the self-identification and social identification of the Chinese immigrants. Moreover, Chinese education is an effective means of fostering Chinese culture. Nowadays, the heat to learn Chinese keeps rising and Chinese has become an important second language in Australia. Not only Chinese Australians but also people from other backgrounds send their children to Chinese schools or classes to learn Chinese language and culture.

Another important place to develop and publicise traditional Chinese culture is the mass organisations. These organisations are now made up of more of the new Chinese immigrants with higher educational levels and technical skills, who are better representative of the immigrant's interests in increasing their social status.

5.5 Unit other ethnic groups

In the multinational country, over 100 ethnic groups coexist peacefully under the multicultural policy. The Chinese immigrants should unite with other groups, listening to their opinions and sharing each other's experience so that they can be better identified to a broader scope.

Looking back on the history of Chinese immigration, we can find a tremendous increase in the political, economic, cultural and social status of the Chinese immigrants. With intensified political awareness, reinforced economic strength and enriched cultural connotation, Chinese immigrants will be better integrated into the Australian society and will be better identified as an open and vigorous group.

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达自己的思想。

2. 重视熟读和背诵。这是模因论第二步“模仿、复制”的要求。模因论使我们认识到熟读和背诵的重要性。熟读和背诵可以使模因深刻地储存在宿主的记忆中,而储存的模因又可以以不同的方式传播扩张。通过大量的阅读,关键重要的部分熟读可以提高我们的阅读能力。大量背诵能积累丰富的词汇、句型。通过背诵经典的语句语段,让背诵的内容成为学生直接表达自己思想的“模因”。当然在背诵的初级阶段不可避免地会带有机机械背诵和模仿的成分,但是随着背诵数量的增加,他们的背诵越来越带有认知的成分,将所习得的语言材料重新进行编码。在言语交际中,这些储存在大脑中的语言模因在需要时可以在大脑中自动提取,背诵的越多,需要用时自动提取的信息量就越大,这样通过积累到最后就可以得到用俄语自如交流的目的了。

3. 加强与俄语国家的人交流。这是模因论第三步“表达、传递思想”的要求,也是俄语学习的最终目的。在交流中会遇到没有模仿或练习过的情景,这就要求学习者对所学知识进行组织和创造。事实上在与俄罗斯人的交流中,可以同时完成模因论的“倾听、领会、复制、模仿、表达和传递思想”三步。很多课本上没有的表达方式和语言习惯都能在交流中习得,从而在语境中理解、复制模仿再到表达。只有不断运用、交流才能熟练地掌握俄语,只有能自由地使用俄语进行跨文化交际,才算学会俄语。学生可以多和我院俄语国家留学生、外教交流座谈,多与他们交往,在实际生活中学会地道的俄语表达方法。

4. 重视教材的选用。高职俄语教学的原则明确要求以“实用为主”,这就决定了我们在选择教材时要遵循“实用性”原则,选择那些实用性强的,便于复制、模仿和传播的学习材料。所以,合适的教材是语言模因得以成功复制和模仿

的前提。学生们通过学习最常用的语言词汇和表达方式,促进成功模因的强化和保留,从而提高学习效率和效果。

四、结 语

语言模因理论与外语教学的密切关系使我们重新审视外语教学。语言模因理论为俄语教学提供了新的思路,开辟了崭新的视角。我们可以利用模因复制、传播的特点来引导学生加强语言中有益模因的输入,提高其语言输出的能力和水平。在语言模因理论指导下,不断改进俄语教学方法,提高俄语教学的有效性。

外语教学的最终目的是培养学生语言的综合运用能力。语言模因理论使我们对语言的本质、语言发展和进化的规律有了更深刻的认识,语言学习的最终目的是要能有效的运用语言,达到与外国人交流的目的。语言模因论丰富了现代语用理论,也给高职俄语教学研究提供了新思路和新视角,也使我们对有效的课堂教学模式有了进一步的思考。运用语言模因理论的俄语教学,对培养学生听说读写译几个方面的俄语综合能力有着显而易见的作用。

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澳大利亚华人移民的自我认同和社会认同

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【摘 要】 在近年的移民潮中,澳大利亚正赢得越来越多华人的青睐。与此同时,这些来自不同文化的华人移民也面临着一大问题,即如何在新的社会、新的国家得到认同。本文分析华人移民的历史和现状,为新移民在身份认同问题上提出一些建议。

【关键词】 华人移民; 澳大利亚; 认同