

Theoretical Basis and Logical Construction of Intercultural Communicative Competence Cultivation in English under the New Curriculum Standard

Yuan Qin, Liyan Wang

School of Foreign Languages, Chifeng University, Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, 024000

Abstract: This article mainly explores the cultivation of cross-cultural communication skills in high school English teaching under the requirements of the 2017 Chinese curriculum standards. Some reports clearly point out that the policy aspect emphasizes taking international cultural literacy as the core ability. However, in classroom practice, exam-oriented teaching mostly marginalizes cultural learning. It proposes a two-tier model, which starts from the language foundation, then moves on to cross-cultural awareness, and finally to ICC. At the same time, it also puts forward practical strategies such as teacher development.

Keywords: intercultural communicative competence, senior high school english teaching

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Since the issuance of the General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition), English education in China has entered a new stage. The Standards clearly state that the fundamental goal of English teaching is no longer the mere transmission of linguistic knowledge, but the cultivation of students' core competencies in the English subject language competence, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. Within this framework, intercultural communicative competence has become a central indicator of whether English education can truly respond to the needs of globalization and China's expanding participation in international affairs. English classrooms are expected to help students not only use correct English, but also use appropriate English in culturally diverse situations.

However, classroom practice still lags behind policy expectations. Influenced by the long-standing exam-oriented education system, many senior high schools continue to focus heavily on vocabulary, grammar, reading skills, and test-taking strategies. At the same time, the rapid development of information technology, the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, and ever-increasing international exchanges have brought Chinese teenagers into much more frequent contact with the outside world—whether through social media, international programs, or face-to-face communication with foreigners. These changes have raised urgent questions for English educators: What theoretical foundations should guide the cultivation of ICC under the new curriculum standards? How can we construct a logical and operable framework that connects theory, curriculum requirements, and classroom practice in a coherent way? This thesis, titled Theoretical Basis and Logical Construction of Intercultural Communicative Competence Cultivation in English under the New Curriculum Standard, is an attempt to respond to these questions.

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and Frontier Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Domestic Research Status

Currently, some scholars in China have conducted research and exploration on cultivating intercultural communicative competence among high school students. These studies cover various aspects, including the current situation of high school students' intercultural communication awareness and abilities, training strategies, and the culture of the target language countries. They provide many practical, actionable suggestions for teaching. For example, Li Yuyao, in her paper *An Investigation and Research on the Current Situation and Countermeasures of High School Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence*, points out that teachers should explore the cultural elements in the textbooks and effectively introduce cultural background knowledge during the teaching process^[1]. Deng Zhaohong, in the article *An Empirical Study on Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Context of the High School English Curriculum Standards*, emphasizes the importance of improving teachers' intercultural communication abilities by enhancing their skill level, mastering basic cultural communication skills, and formulating efficient and feasible teaching methods under certain principles^[2]. Zhang Shan, in *An Investigation and Analysis of the Current Situation of Cultivating Intercultural Communication Awareness in High School English Teaching*, states, "Students should be encouraged to consciously engage in the learning and accumulation of intercultural knowledge^[3]. The development of this competence is of great practical significance for students' future development.

1.2.2 Foreign Research Status

Crozet and Liddicoat (1995) pointed out that the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence requires both the learning of concepts and experiential learning^[4]. The roles of both teachers and students in intercultural teaching need to be redefined, with students at the center and teachers acting as partners in the process of language and culture learning. There is a need to rethink the methods of teaching assessment. Evaluation methods can include self-assessment, interpretation, induction, discussion, and writing.

According to Canale and Swain (1980), the urgency and immediacy of communication have led people to realize that the integration of language and culture is more important than the earlier focus on grammar^[5]. Many reference books have addressed how to teach culture effectively in foreign language classrooms, indicating that people now consider the ability to communicate within the cultural context of the target language as one of the goals of foreign language teaching.

2. Related Concepts

2.1 Language and Culture

Language is an indispensable element in our daily life. It is so deeply rooted in our lives that we usually do not pay much attention to it. The Fifth edition of the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* provides several explanations for the word language, which include: The language system used by the residents of a specific country or region for written or oral communication, for instance, when you can talk in several languages, the written or oral characters used for the purpose of communication are like the roots of a language, a specific style or vocabulary category. Such expressions are mostly used in written discourse. Informal terms that are generally regarded as offensive, such as vulgar language and technical terms, for instance, a set of instructions for running a computer, like web-based programming languages. Although language has many different meanings, we mainly focus on the first two.

2.2 Cultural Awareness

The promulgation of the *General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition)* has provided a clearer direction for the vast number of senior high school English teachers in China: in the process of English teaching, they should help students achieve the four-dimensional goals of core competencies in the English subject. These four goals are linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. Professors Mei Deming and Wang Qiang point out in the book *An Interpretation of the New Senior High School English Curriculum Standards*, which they co-edited, that "in the past we attached more importance to the laws or knowledge of the discipline itself, whereas in fact every discipline is faced with the question of how to cultivate people. As one element of the core competencies in the English subject, cultural awareness bears the important responsibility of helping young people establish correct values."

3. The Current Situation

3.1 Exam-oriented Teaching and the Marginalisation of Intercultural Aims

In many senior high schools, English teaching is still dominated by the logic of exam preparation. Under the influence of the test-driven system, teachers devote the bulk of class time to explaining vocabulary, grammar rules and reading skills that are directly related to the college entrance examination. Lessons are carefully organised around doing past papers, analysing sentence patterns and drilling language points. As a result, students can often recite large numbers of words, recognize complex structures and perform reasonably well in written tests. On the surface, their language knowledge looks solid and measurable.

3.2 Under-use of Cultural Content in Existing Textbooks

Current senior high school English textbooks in China actually contain a considerable amount of intercultural content. For example, the People's Education Press 2019 Ordinary Senior High School English includes Unit 4 Body Language, which introduces how different gestures carry different meanings across cultures. Similar units on festivals, customs, ways of thinking and social norms appear throughout the series. In theory, these materials provide rich resources for cultivating cultural awareness and helping students compare and reflect on different cultures.

4. Optimization Measures for Cultivating Intercultural Communicative Competence

4.1 Make Rational Use of Existing Textbooks and Cultivate Cross-cultural Awareness in Teaching and Learning

The new English textbook of the People's Education Edition (2019) compiled according to the new curriculum standards provides us with content related to cross-cultural communication between Chinese and foreign languages and authentic and idiomatic English texts in the teaching process. Therefore, in the teaching process, teachers should change the traditional teaching method - overemphasizing the teaching of students' language and grammar knowledge and only focusing on students' mastery of language and grammar knowledge - and shift to emphasizing the cultivation of students' awareness of the values of Chinese excellent traditional culture. Through the comparison and analysis of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, guide students to train their dialectical and critical thinking. Design open-ended questions to guide students to think dialectically and critically view different cultures, allowing students to express their personal views and write their opinions.

4.2 Enhancing Teachers' Cultural Literacy and Teaching Intercultural Knowledge

During the Christmas period, teachers can organize some Christmas-related activities in the classroom, giving students the opportunity to get in touch with Western cultural traditions. In these activities, students can exchange some small gifts with each other and then express their festival blessings in English. And compare these customs of Christmas in the West with those of the Spring Festival in China. In this way, students can have a more genuine understanding of these two different cultures. Teachers must enhance their sensitivity to cultural differences and adopt some flexible teaching methods that are suitable for the local learning environment. These teaching methods can help students view cultural differences with a more critical and inclusive perspective. It is also conducive to cultivating talents in cross-cultural communication with a unique Chinese perspective.

5. Conclusion

This article aims to explore the theoretical basis and logical approaches for cultivating cross-cultural communication skills in high school English education within the framework of the general high school English curriculum standards. Through a comprehensive review of concepts such as language, culture, cultural awareness, communication skills, and international business communication skills, this article clarifies the intrinsic connections among these elements. And their overall consistency with the four core competencies of the English subject. Theoretical synthesis shows that cross-cultural communication ability is not an isolated skill. On the contrary, it emerges from the dynamic interaction among language proficiency, cultural knowledge, cognitive development and emotional participation. This provides a very solid conceptual foundation for understanding why cross-cultural communication ability should become the core goal of contemporary high school English education in China.

2025 Inner Mongolia Social Sciences Fund Project:

"Research on Graded Integration of Cultural Themes in Basic Education English Curriculum and Construction of Intercultural Communication Competence Cultivation System"(Project No.: 2025WY36).

Reference

[1] Li, Y. Y. (2019). A survey on the current situation and countermeasures of senior high school students' intercultural communicative competence (Master's thesis). Hainan Normal University.

[2] Deng, Z. H. (2020). An empirical study on senior high school students' intercultural communicative competence from the perspective of the senior high school English curriculum standards (Master's thesis). Central China Normal University.

[3] Zhang, S. (2020). A survey and analysis of the current situation of cultivating intercultural communication awareness in senior high school English teaching (Master's thesis). Chongqing Normal University.

[4] Crozet and Liddicoat.(1995).Software engineering competency models and intercultural communication competencies, 232, 112-126.

[5] Canale,M&Swain.1980.Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. Applied linguistics,212,119-210

About author:

Yuan Qin (2002 -), Female, Postgraduate student majoring in English at the School of Foreign Languages, Chifeng University. Research Focus: English Language Teaching Methodology.

Liyan Wang (1976 -), Female, Associate Professor at the School of Foreign Languages, Chifeng University; Master's Supervisor. Research Focus: English Language Teaching Methodology.