Study on the Cultivation of Intercultural Communicative Competence in University English Education

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ABSTRACT

In the process of globalization, the function of language as a medium of mutual learning between civilizations is increasingly prominent. In view of the marginalization of intercultural communicative competence in current teaching practice, this paper expounds the multidimensional connotation of intercultural communicative competence and its dual value in national strategy and personal development. This paper analyzes the core factors that restrict the development of ability, including the structural imbalance of curriculum system, the lack of teachers' cross-cultural literacy and the orientation deviation of assessment mechanism. On this basis, the implementation path covering curriculum content reconstruction, teaching mode innovation and multi-dimensional assessment system is constructed. The research shows that the internalization of competence can be effectively promoted by establishing a two-way interaction mechanism between mother tongue and target language culture, introducing experiential learning and critical reflection strategies, and improving process assessment indicators. University English education needs to break through the single language training mode, establish the central position of cross-cultural communicative competence in core literacy, and realize the logical self-consistency of curriculum, teaching and assessment through top-level design.

Keywords: *University English education, Cross-cultural communication ability, Theoretical connotation, Constraints, Implementation strategy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

With the deep development of globalization and the profound evolution of international structure, language is no longer just a tool for communication, but also a core medium for cultural bearing and mutual learning of civilizations [1]. University English course should be both instrumental and humanistic, and the cultivation of intercultural communication ability is the key embodiment of humanistic characteristics [2]. In the current university English education, the problem of long-term emphasis on language skills training and neglect of cultural literacy cultivation is still outstanding [3]. Teaching practice is often limited to the teaching of vocabulary and grammar knowledge and the training of test-taking ability. This leads students to master certain language knowledge, but in the real cross-cultural context, they often can't express themselves accurately because they don't understand the cultural background, or have communication barriers due to cultural differences [4]. This imbalance of ability structure restricts the improvement of students' global competence, and it is also difficult to meet the demand of international strategy for compound talents.

Cross-cultural communication is not a simple superposition of language knowledge and cultural background, but a multi-dimensional comprehensive ability involving cognition, emotion and behavior [5]. In the current educational ecology, the structural imbalance of curriculum system, the limitation of teachers' literacy and the orientation deviation of assessment mechanism together constitute the bottleneck restricting the development of ability [6]. If we can't clarify the connotation of ability from the theoretical level and break through the institutional obstacles in practice,

the reform of English education will be difficult to touch the core [7]. In addition, with the consolidation of English as an international lingua franca (ELF) and the increasingly complex communication scenes, the traditional monocultural teaching model can no longer meet the practical needs of multicultural interaction.

From a theoretical perspective, this paper analyzes the connotation structure and educational value of intercultural communicative competence, diagnoses the structural constraints in the current educational ecology, and constructs a scientific and feasible training path accordingly. The article will define the theoretical scope of cross-cultural communication competence and clarify its core value in talent cultivation; analyze the existing issues in the current teaching system, such as content imbalance, teacher limitations, and assessment biases; and propose implementation strategies encompassing curriculum restructuring, model innovation, and assessment reform. Through this logical evolution, this paper hopes to provide theoretical support for the deepening reform of English education in universities and promote the transformation of English education from simple language training to holistic education and cultural education.

2. CONNOTATION OF ABILITY AND EDUCATIONAL VALUE

Cross-cultural communicative competence refers to the comprehensive quality of an individual to communicate effectively and appropriately in a specific cultural situation [8]. From the perspective of theoretical framework, this ability transcends the traditional language and covers four core dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitude and consciousness. Knowledge dimension requires mastering the cultural norms of mother tongue and target language; the skill dimension emphasizes the practical ability of explanation, relevance and interaction; Attitude dimension involves openness and curiosity; the dimension of consciousness points to critical cultural reflection. Language and culture are both external and internal, language is the carrier of culture, and culture is the soul of language. They cannot be separated in teaching.

On the value level of higher education, the cultivation of intercultural communication ability has dual significance. Macroscopically, it is an important part of the construction of national cultural soft power, which helps to enhance the international communication efficiency of China's discourse. Under the background of new liberal arts construction, English education should undertake the mission of telling the story of China well and promoting mutual learning among civilizations. Microscopically, it conforms to the concept of holistic education, which can broaden students' international horizons and enhance their adaptability and competitiveness in the global environment. Through cross-cultural learning, students can master foreign language tools and form an inclusive and diverse cultural mentality and critical thinking [9]. This value orientation determines that intercultural communicative competence should not be an accessory of English teaching, but a central link of core literacy.

3. TEACHING STATUS AND CONSTRAINTS

At present, in the practice of cultivating cross-cultural communicative competence, English education in universities is generally faced with the double dilemma of structural imbalance of curriculum system and superficial teaching content [10]. Although most syllabuses have been incorporated into cultural teaching objectives, there is still a clear separation between language skills training and cultural content input at the actual implementation level. The curriculum system often pays too much attention to vocabulary memory, grammar analysis and the polishing of test-taking skills, which leads to the cultural teaching becoming an accessory embellishment of language knowledge and lacking independent and systematic module support. The lack and lag of cultural dimension in the compilation of teaching materials further aggravated this contradiction. The existing teaching materials mostly present static cultural knowledge list, lacking dynamic communication situation creation, and it is difficult to guide students to deeply understand the values and thinking patterns behind culture. This dislocation between content supply and ability demand directly leads to students' lack of adaptability in cross-cultural context. The comparison framework between the proposed ideal dimensions and the deviation from reality is shown in "Table 1".

Table 1. Comparison of ideal dimensions and practical deviations

Dimension	Theoretical Goal & Ideal Target	Practical Reality & Teaching Focus	Core Deviation
Knowledge Construction	Systematic cultural schema and deep value comprehension	Fragmented folk customs and surface-level symbol memorization	Insufficient depth; lack of logical connection
Skill Application	Contextualized strategy adjustment and appropriate communication	Formalized linguistic accuracy and standardized output	Overemphasis on form; neglect of communicative effectiveness
Affective Attitude	Open and inclusive mindset with empathy	Instrumental test-oriented motivation and utilitarian tendency	Lack of intrinsic drive; low emotional engagement
Critical Awareness	Critical cultural comparison and self-reflection	Passive cultural acceptance and stereotype fixation	Absence of critical thinking; weakened subjectivity

There are obvious deviations in the four core dimensions of knowledge, skills, attitude and consciousness in teaching practice. This deviation not only stems from the setting of curriculum content, but also is deeply restricted by the limitations of teachers' literacy. As the key subject of teaching implementation, teachers' own cross-cultural theoretical reserves and experience directly determine the quality of cultural education. However, at present, most university English teachers grow up in the traditional language teaching system and lack systematic cross-cultural theoretical training and real overseas cultural immersion experience. In addition, the traditional teaching inertia constitutes a hidden restriction on the introduction of culture. Teachers are used to controlling the right to speak in class, lacking the consciousness and ability to guide students to have equal cultural dialogue, and unable to touch the collision and integration of thinking.

The orientation deviation of assessment mechanism is another institutional obstacle that restricts the development of cross-cultural communication ability. At present, the university English assessment system still mainly relies on standardized tests. This single quantitative assessment model naturally tends to examine quantifiable language knowledge points, but it is difficult to effectively evaluate students' hidden abilities such as cultural awareness, emotional attitude and communication strategies. The difficulty in the implementation of process assessment in the cultural dimension lies in the lack of scientific observation indicators and operational tools, which makes it difficult to bring the cultivation of cultural ability into the scope of students' academic performance assessment. The dislocation between the testing system and the communicative competence goal leads students to focus on the improvement of test-taking skills rather than the internalization of cross-cultural literacy. The failure of this assessment baton makes the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence lack the necessary incentive and restraint mechanism at the institutional level, which hinders the transformation of English education to the humanistic and comprehensive direction.

4. TRAINING PATH AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

University English education urgently needs to build a systematic cross-cultural communication ability training path to realize the paradigm transformation from knowledge transfer to literacy education. Educators should break the single barrier of traditional language skills training and establish a cultural module embedding mechanism based on theme meaning. The curriculum system needs to clarify the two-way interactive position of mother tongue culture and target language culture, and avoid one-way indoctrination of culture teaching. The innovation and transformation of teaching mode is the key to the landing of ability. The classroom should be transformed from a place for imparting knowledge into a space for experiential learning. Teachers need to guide students to carry out dialogue with critical cultural awareness, and use the collaborative educational function of the second classroom and social practice to expand the learning boundary. Multi-dimensional construction of assessment system provides institutional guarantee for ability training. Educational management departments should introduce the concept of value-added assessment, establish a combination mechanism of qualitative assessment and quantitative assessment, and form a closed loop of assessment feedback oriented to ability output. This systematic path requires the overall planning of the top-level design of university English education to ensure the logical self-consistency among curriculum, teaching and assessment. The main body of education implementation needs to be

clear about its responsibilities in cross-cultural education and avoid the disconnection of all links. The whole training process should always adhere to the student-centered, and ensure that all strategies serve the internalization and promotion of students' cross-cultural literacy. "Table 2" shows the multi-dimensional implementation matrix of intercultural communicative competence training.

Table 2. Implementation matrix for intercultural competence development

Development Dimension	Course Delivery Format	Core Teaching Strategy	Expected Competency Outcome
Cognitive Dimension	Thematic cultural modules	Comparative analysis and critical discussion	Construction of deep cultural schema and knowledge system
Behavioral Dimension	Contextualized simulation tasks	Role-play and project-based learning	Optimization of communicative strategies and contextual adaptability
Affective Dimension	Immersive cultural experience	Reflective journaling and affective dialogue	Enhanced cultural empathy and inclusive mindset
Assessment Dimension	Whole-process growth portfolio	Multi-stakeholder collaborative assessment mechanism	Realized competence value-added and feedback loop closure

The matrix covers four key levels: cognition, behavior, emotion and assessment. There is a close logical progressive relationship between all levels. In the cognitive dimension, the curriculum carrier should adopt the thematic cultural module. The core teaching strategy focuses on comparative analysis and critical discussion, and the expected ability output is to build a deep cultural schema and knowledge system. This requires teachers to make clear the logical structure of cultural knowledge in teaching design and avoid the accumulation of fragmented information. In the behavioral dimension, the situational simulation task becomes the main carrier. Role-playing and project-based learning strategies can effectively optimize students' communication strategies and contextual adaptability, and make language use break away from mechanical practice and turn to problem solving in real situations. The cultivation of emotional dimension depends on the immersive cultural experience. Reflective diary and emotional dialogue help to enhance students' cultural empathy and inclusive mentality, and solve the problems of insufficient emotional input and utilitarian motivation. This systematic path requires the overall planning of the top-level design of university English education to ensure the logical self-consistency among curriculum, teaching and assessment. The main body of education implementation needs to be clear about its responsibilities in cross-cultural education and avoid the disconnection of all links. The whole training process should always adhere to the student-centered, and ensure that all strategies serve the internalization and promotion of students' cross-cultural literacy.

5. CONCLUSION

Cross-cultural communicative competence is not only an extension of language skills, but also a comprehensive accomplishment covering knowledge, skills, attitude and consciousness. It has irreplaceable core value in enhancing the national cultural soft power and cultivating students' global competence. Language and culture are interdependent, so English teaching cannot be divorced from the cultural context, otherwise students may not be able to express themselves effectively because of the lack of corresponding cultural knowledge. The separation of curriculum content, the limitation of teachers' literacy and the deviation of assessment mechanism in current educational practice constitute structural obstacles that restrict the development of ability. The root of these problems lies in the excessive pursuit of instrumental rationality by traditional teaching paradigm, which ignores the humanistic attribute of education.

The construction of training path must adhere to the principle of integrity and realize the logical self-consistency among curriculum, teaching and assessment. The reconstruction of curriculum content should strengthen the embedding and two-way interaction of cultural modules to avoid the fragmentation of cultural knowledge; The transformation of teaching mode needs to pay attention to the cultivation of experiential learning and critical thinking, and guide students from passive acceptance to active reflection; The multidimensional construction of the assessment system provides institutional guarantee for the internalization of ability and ensures the

consistency between teaching objectives and assessment results. Educators need to realize that the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence is a long-term dynamic process, not a short-term knowledge infusion. Future reform should continue to pay attention to the improvement of teachers' intercultural theoretical literacy, deepen the application of digital resources in the creation of teaching situations, and constantly improve the value-added assessment mechanism.

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