

# Study on Cultivation of College Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence in Context of Globalization\*

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**Abstract**—Currently English has become a lingua franca and much importance must be attached to the cultivation of Chinese college students' intercultural communicating competence in order for them to communicate Chinese culture to the outside world, which can promote Chinese culture to go abroad and enhance the international influence of Chinese cultures. Two paths may be adopted in the college English teaching: first, to carry out intercultural teaching action research, and second learners acting as ethnography researchers.

**Keywords**—intercultural communicative competence; college student; action research; ethnography

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, the scope of using English has expanded. The number of non-native speakers of communicating in English has far exceeded that of native speakers, and English has become a communicating tool between international speakers of different languages. [1] Communication in English may occur between native and non-native English speakers, such as Chinese and English or Americans, or Chinese and South Koreans or South Africans. Therefore, many scholars propose to replace "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) with "English as a lingua franca" (ELF). All countries in the world attach great importance to cultural soft power, and our country has also raised the cultural power to a national strategy. It emphasizes drawing Chinese excellent traditional and cultural ideas, spreading Chinese culture to the world and promoting exchanges between Chinese and foreign civilizations. Cultural transmission is soft and immersive, of which interpersonal communication is one of the richest, best and most effective forms. Fostering college students' ability to use English to communicate Chinese culture abroad can push Chinese culture to go global and enhance its international influence. Therefore, attaching importance to and cultivating the intercultural communicative competence of Chinese undergraduates has become an urgent and important task.

## II. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION OF CHINESE CULTURE

Chinese civilization has a long history and has had an important impact on world civilization. As China's economic development and international status have been enhanced, the brilliant and long-lasting Chinese culture is drawing more and more attention from the world. The Chinese element has become a hot topic and has provided rich creative inspiration to art, literature and video works in today's world. However, it must be admitted that the Chinese culture is not yet an international mainstream culture and the strength of cultural competition is not commensurate with the ever-increasing comprehensive national strength and economic strength of our country. Data show that in the world cultural markets, the United States accounted for 43%, the European Union 34%, Asia Pacific 19%, of which Japan accounted for 10%, Australia 5%, the remaining 4% belongs to other Asia Pacific countries including China. Many foreign people have little understanding of or even misunderstand China, Chinese, and Chinese cultures. Some foreign people's impression of China remains before China's reform and opening up or even before 1949. Our achievements in economic and social development are obvious to all. We can and should exactly demonstrate the true situation of our country to the world objectively and completely, showing the spiritual outlook of our people of all nationalities and introduce our social system and values. To achieve the above goals, we must attach importance to and implement the "going out" of Chinese culture.

It is imperative that the Chinese culture should be able to attract and inspire people of all countries in the world more vigorously [2], with important Chinese traditional culture being actively moving toward the world and increasing the international influence of traditional culture in order to enhance China's cultural soft power, one aspect of which is to tell China stories well. The key of doing it well is to conveying the Chinese people's ideas and values from the perspective of the listeners. While reflecting the reality of China's development, they also take care of the needs of foreign audiences for Chinese information and conform to the thinking habits of them. At present, English is mainly

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used as a medium in transnational cultural exchanges. Although all the languages have a place in the international arena, they cannot shake the position of the international lingua franca of English.

Using English in an acceptable way to introduce China's culture and national conditions to foreigners can effectively improve China's cultural soft power. If every English learner can do this, then the rate of improving China's cultural soft power will be greatly accelerated. College students are the most active and energetic group among the Chinese people, who are huge in number and have become fans of the new media and a new force of foreign exchange. Students not only can directly affect the external publicity effect, but also can form a radiation-driven effect, largely affecting more public outreach behavior. Therefore, it is necessary to give full play to the role of undergraduates in the cultural international communication and emphasize the cultivation of their intercultural communicative competence, which puts forward higher requirements for college English teaching.

### III. CONNOTATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Before cultivating the intercultural communicative competence of college students, we must first clearly understand the connotation of it. From the perspective of intercultural communication, culture mainly involves the lifestyle, social organization, customs and standards of different communities. Culture can be divided into "communicative culture" and "knowledge culture". While knowledge culture has no direct impact on intercultural communication, communicative cultures such as social customs, values, worldviews, history and religion have a direct impact on it [3]. The concept of communicative competence was first proposed by Hymes who believes that communicative competence includes not only the grammatical correctness of speech act but also the social acceptability of it[4]. According to Deardorff's survey of internationally renowned intercultural communicators, the definition of intercultural communicative competence with the highest degree of recognition is: "Communicator's ability to communicate properly and effectively in an intercultural environment based on his / her own cross-cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes"[5].

The ability to behave properly in one or more cultural settings actually requires that we be able to adapt our own cultural frame of reference to specific and different communicative objects in a variety of intercultural communicative situations and flexibly respond to them in a decent and effective manner. To communicate "Effectively" means that we, after a certain amount of efforts, within a certain period of time, have succeeded in attaining our stated goal and getting the due reward. "Decently" refers to the norms that both parties consider important in the communication process, and the expectations of the relationship between them are not seriously violated. These two standards have guiding function for cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence.

With the development of globalization and the deepening of internationalization, English has long ceased to be "native speakers of English" and has become an "international lingua franca, "gradually separating itself from the traditional geographical environment and the connection with native language groups to a common communicative tool among people in different countries and regions in the world who speak different native languages. English no longer just belongs to the United Kingdom, the United States and other inner-state people, but to all English users. Therefore, not only English-speaking cultures should become the environment and target of English language teaching, but also the learners' native culture and other cultures around the world can and should become the content of English teaching. Learners go beyond the shackles of their native language and target language and their respective specific cultures to understand different ways of thinking and lifestyles, to broaden their horizons and to develop flexible, communicative ability that fits in a variety of socio-cultural contexts. Even in the face of the cultural groups that they themselves have never touched or understood directly, they can live together in amity and communicate effectively with them. [6]

### IV. PATHS OF CULTIVATING COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Overall, the main factors of intercultural communicative competence are concentrated in three levels: emotion, cognition and behavior. At the cognitive level, communicators must not only learn general cultural knowledge, but also have political, economic, geographical, historical, cultural and religious knowledge, customs and other aspects of their home country and of other countries. Emotional levels include communicators' sensitivity to cultural differences, inclusiveness of different cultures, deep understanding of one's own culture and respect of other cultures. Behavioral level mainly refers to communicator's various abilities, such as language ability, non-verbal ability, adaptability, ability to deal with interpersonal relationships, psychological adjustment ability, ability to adapt to the environment and ability to work in different cultural environments.

According to the constructivism theory of learning, learners' constructed knowledge based on their own experience needs to be tested in the specific context of the problems and is reconstructed with the deepening of understanding. Students' ability of intercultural communication can be effectively tested only in intercultural communication practice. Intercultural communication skills training consists of three levels: at the cognitive level, it goes like the general lectures, reading materials, the use of audio-visual products, online education etc; at the emotional level, a typical case analysis, interaction with people of different cultural backgrounds, field experience etc are included; at the behavioural level, among the communicator's various abilities, language ability which is more specific can be learned through lectures, and be tested scientifically, whereas other non-language skills can mainly be fostered in the actual life and work. These three levels are often intertwined in the

communication process, rather than separated from each other. Therefore, we can try to take the following two paths in college English teaching to improve college students' intercultural communicative skills.

#### *A. Carrying out Intercultural Teaching Action Research*

Action research, first proposed by the social psychology pioneer, Kurt Lewin, is "a way of understanding a social system and of trying to reform it." So far action research has entered the field of education, and it is a self-reflection research. Its most basic feature is the combination of "action" and "research". In practice, it validates the theory and improves teaching so as to enhance the understanding of curriculum outline, teaching, and learning, better interpreting and testing the current teaching theory. Action research requires teachers to assume the role of researchers, regard the classroom as a laboratory, continue to search for problems in teaching, find effective solutions, and improve the quality of teaching. The whole process of research shows an upward trend without ending.[7]

College English teachers select a specific number of college students as the research object to conduct at least 1 year of action research. First of all, know about the status quo of Chinese college students' intercultural communicative competence. *Intercultural Communicative Competence Self-Report Scale (ICCSRS)*[8], which was formulated by Zhong Hua et al., can be used to conduct an intercultural competence test of students, and to collect, classify and explain the test data, so as to have a comprehensive and scientific grasp of the situation. Secondly, according to the characteristics of intercultural teaching and the principles to be followed, the teaching activities designed around the theme of the unit and in accordance with Moran's cultural learning model, namely knowing about, knowing how, knowing why and knowing oneself[9], are divided into four sections: describing cultural information, analyzing cases, participating in communication, and reflecting on cultural differences. Finally, at the end of the teaching of intercultural action, we will use the *ICCSRS* to examine the improvement of students' intercultural competence. In view of the limitations of self-test meter, in the whole teaching process students are required to establish learning history files, so it is easy to monitor and manage the teaching process. According to the records of students learning history files, teachers' observation and interviews with students, we timely evaluate teaching effect, summarize teaching ideas and improve teaching modes.

From the designing and arrangement of English courses to the orderly carrying out of classroom activities, language and culture teaching should always be complementary. Considering that students in different stages of learning have different levels of cognition and learning needs, the proportion of language and culture teaching can be moderately adjusted. However, full training of language skills and ignoring cultural cultivation do not meet the needs of foreign language teaching and social development. Let students reflect on the cultural differences between China and the West and enhance their understanding of the theme and culture of native speakers in the form of group

discussions and the establishment of learning history files during classes. While we emphasize the introduction of Western culture, we must also attach importance to the infiltration of Chinese culture so that students will learn to use English to introduce China's culture and national conditions. The integration of Chinese culture into college English teaching cannot replace the specialized Chinese culture course, nor can it change the nature of the English course. Instead, it should serve the training of the students' English language ability and intercultural communicative ability.

#### *B. Learners as Ethnographers*

Intercultural communicative competence is essentially a behavioral level of ability, and it is not enough just to organize classroom activities by teachers. College English intercultural teaching should aim at cultivating intercultural communicators, and only by comparing, experiencing and learning different cultures can they have a deep understanding of the similarities and differences between the two languages and cultures before they can talk about cultivating intercultural communicative competence.

Ethnography originated from the fieldwork act, used by the British anthropologist Malinowski, whose primary means was participant observation. Researchers, usually from the perspective of emic, grasp the meaning of one or more aspects of the social behavior or life of a certain population through rich descriptions, which is a typical qualitative research method. Participation in observation and various forms of interviews are the most common methods for corpus collection. Depending on the nature or the purpose of the research, the researcher may or may not be predominantly participatory; the interview may take many forms but is typically open, in-depth and informal. Through interviews, researchers can better correlate the observations with the respondents' life experiences.[10]

With the development of disciplines, ethnography research methods are gradually applied to intercultural training and foreign language teaching, and beyond the discipline limits, developed into a more flexible and practical research method. That is, whether in the target language environment or in the native culture environment, as long as there is a group from the target culture, we can use the method of participatory observation to learn culture. And in intercultural English teaching, since English is taught as a common language, the object of cultural learning can be any cultural group in the world. For example, with the deepening of China's reform and opening up, the number of foreigners who study, do business, work and travel in China is on the rise. They exist as different cultural groups and create conditions for college students' cultural learning and English communication. As researchers of ethnography, learners do not mean that they are not guided by classroom teaching and teachers. On the contrary, under the arrangement or encouragement of teachers, college students carry out intercultural communication really with people from English-speaking countries and other countries.

As researchers of ethnography, college students, on the basis of learning cultural knowledge, contrast cultures, enhance intercultural awareness, communicate with English native speakers or non-native speakers in English, test knowledge and skills in real communicative contexts, reconstruct knowledge and train skills, develop a positive social motivation, and learn how to adapt to a variety of intercultural environment. Based on this, college students continue to practice in their own life, study and work, and improve their intercultural communicative competence so as to benefit themselves for life. Moreover, there is no end to the improvement of intercultural competence, which should be a continuous lifelong learning and not be limited to a specific intercultural environment, and be able to be flexibly applied to the exchange of various cultures.

#### V. CONCLUSION

With the advancing of globalization, intercultural communication has become the living condition of the residents in the "Global Village". In the process of globalization, English has become an international lingua franca rather than belong to English native speakers. Under this background, the model of intercultural communicative competence transcending any particular culture can make people in different cultural communities more fully realize their own potential in their interactions with each other, while preserving their own cultural characteristics as much as possible, approaching and understanding each other to the maximum extent possible. This is of great significance to the present-day world where intercultural communication has become a universal reality. At present, there is still a long way to go for undergraduates in China as a new force in the dissemination of Chinese culture. This is mainly due to the generally low intercultural communicative competence of college students and the lack of their capability to spread Chinese culture in English. As the main channel to cultivate intercultural communicative competence, foreign language education has the ultimate goal of cultivating intercultural communicative competence among college students. This is of highly practical significance to enhancing the international influence of Chinese cultures, strengthening the building of national cultural soft power and implementing the strategy of strengthening China through cultures.

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