

Cultivating Junior High School Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence Aiming at the Cultural Awareness Goals in *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022)*

Rui Luo

Language School, Sichuan Normal University, Chengdu, China

Abstract: Based on *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022)*, the target requirements of Cultural Awareness from Grade 7 to Grade 9, namely “Comparison and Judgment”, “Adjustment and Communication”, “Perception and Internalization”, it is found that the intercultural communicative competence of junior high school students in China is insufficient, and the cultivation of junior high school students' intercultural communicative competence in English teaching is also insufficient. Finally, teaching suggestions are put forward according to three specific goals: 1) finding similarities and differences to realize “Comparison and Judgment”; 2) communicating appropriately to achieve “Adjustment and Communication”; 3) investigating the reasons to attain “Perception and Internalization”.

Keywords: Cultural Awareness, English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education, Intercultural communicative competence.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, internationalization and globalization have become important trends. The ties between countries are increasingly close, and the demand for cross-cultural communication is also increasing to cope with the impact of cultural differences, which puts forward more requirements for talent training, and countries generally recognize the importance of foreign language education in national development. The Ministry of Education of China has mentioned the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence in different English syllabuses. *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022) set intercultural communicative competence as one of the goals of the compulsory English curriculum. Cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence can enhance students' diverse understanding of the world, form an open and inclusive attitude, and better integrate into the future society. It can also spread Chinese voices and tell Chinese stories (Liu Sen, 2018). Strengthening the cultivation of this ability is a special mission given to English teachers by the development of the times.

Byram (2008) believes that the development of intercultural communicative competence is a long-term and arduous task in Europe. Coperias (2009) points out that since it is difficult to fully predict the cross-cultural knowledge that learners need at different times and occasions, the development of this ability should be an activity that a person needs to engage in the whole life. Although it is difficult to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence in primary and secondary schools, the standards for talents in today's society do not vary from person to person. Only by following the development trend of the times can China become more competitive in the international society. Therefore, English teaching in primary and secondary schools should face difficulties, respond to the call of the times, guide

students to strengthen the study of foreign cultures, promote the understanding of the national culture, gradually broaden cultural horizons, cultivate cross-cultural awareness and preliminary intercultural communicative competence, laying a solid foundation for future intercultural communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition

2.1.1. Cultural Awareness goals in English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022)

The new curriculum standard stipulates that the curriculum nature of the English subject includes improving students' awareness and ability to compare cultural similarities and differences, and to form intercultural communicative competence. The core competence in the course goal points out that cultural awareness refers to the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and the appreciation of excellent cultures, and it shows student's choices of intercultural cognition, attitude and behavior. The third period in the compulsory education stage is from Grade 7 to Grade 9, the goal of Cultural Awareness in this period includes three aspects: “Comparison and Judgment”, “Adjustment and Communication”, “Perception and Internalization”, among which, the content related to intercultural communicative competence is as follows: 1) “Comparison and Judgment”: students are able to respect cultural diversity and differences, and make their own judgments on the basis of understanding and comparison, be able to describe cultural phenomena and cultural differences in the language they have learned, express their value orientation, and establish an international perspective, with the basic ability to compare and judge cultural similarities and differences; 2) “Adjustment and Communication”: students are able to recognize the importance of effective intercultural communication, choose appropriate communication strategies, be able to recognize mistakes and correct them appropriately, and initially have the ability to communicate in English they have learned; 3)

“Perception and Internalization”: students are able to understand the connotation of excellent Chinese and foreign cultures, have a sense of national identity and cultural self-confidence, have correct values and a positive emotional attitude.

2.1.2. Intercultural communicative competence

Because of its rich connotation, intercultural communicative competence has not been defined consistently by scholars at home and abroad so far. Deardorff (2015) thinks intercultural communicative competence includes four aspects: attitude, knowledge and understanding, internal results and external results. Martin (2015) believes that the existing theoretical models of intercultural communicative competence all attribute the core elements of intercultural communicative competence to the ABC paradigm, A is emotion, B is behavior, and C is cognition or knowledge.

Jia Yuxin (1997) tells us that the ultimate goal of foreign language teaching is intercultural communicative competence. He believes that intercultural communicative competence should include basic communicative competence system, emotional and relational competence system, the plot competence system and the communicative strategy competence system. Wen Qiufang (1997) believes that intercultural communicative competence should be composed of communicative competence and intercultural competence. The communicative competence is composed of linguistic competence, pragmatic competence and strategic competence. Intercultural competence is composed of three important components: intercultural sensitivity, inclusivity and flexibility. Intercultural communicative competence is a dynamically developing concept. Scholars mainly cover intercultural communicative competence: sufficient intercultural knowledge, positive communication purpose, and effective communication skills.

2.2. Researches on cultivating intercultural communicative competence at home and abroad

2.2.1. Study abroad

It is generally believed that Hall's *The Silent Language* (1991) marks the emergence of the subject of intercultural communication. Hall's most prominent contribution lies in the theoretical breakthrough of cultural studies. He believes that the barriers in intercultural communication come from the differences between different cultures, and he also clarifies that the study of spanning is the focus of the entire study of intercultural research. The research on the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence predates this concept. In 1932, the Experiment in International Living (now renamed World Learning) organized by the U.S. government made a research. Some learners were asked to study in a certain country for a period of time to cultivate their own cross-regional cultural communication skills, and later this method is also widely used in the field of cross-language and cultural communication to train cross-regional cultural communication competence.

From the 1960s to the 1970s, the international development of intercultural communication become more and more mature and standardized, and related theories began to be applied to the government's diplomatic work and the training of volunteers for intercultural communication, and achieved certain results. Beginning in the 1980s, many scholars of intercultural studies began to focus on the development of

intercultural communication theory.

In the 1990s, the research on the issue of intercultural communication in the United States shifted from domestic issues to international issues, paying special attention to and strengthening the research on Americans and East Asians, especially Chinese. After entering the 21st century, people have made important breakthroughs in the study of intercultural communication. Deardorff constructed a pyramid model in 2006, which is mainly used to evaluate the results of learning and further develop measurable learning results.

2.2.2. Study at home

Compared with the United States, the research on intercultural communication in China started relatively late, but in the past 30 years, intercultural communication competence has received special attention from researchers in China, especially foreign language educators. According to Yi Bin's research, in 1978, with the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy, Chinese people began to have close ties with foreigners of various occupations, which gave birth to the demand for English-speaking talents. However, because English learners knew little about foreign cultures, cultural shock and cultural conflict often occurred in the process of communication. Chinese foreign language educators began to pay attention to this problem and realized that foreign language education should not only adopt the method of grammar translation, but should pay attention to the cultural factors behind the language and improve students' cross-cultural communication competence. In 1980, Xu Guozhang published the article “Culturally-loaded Words and English Language Teaching”, which mainly discussed the translation of words and the relationship between the cultural meanings of words. He pointed out that in different languages, words that express the same literal meaning may hide different cultural meanings. This article is regarded as a sign of the beginning of intercultural communication in China. Zhang Yiqun (1981) deeply analyze the cases in the real environment and discuss the new problems of French education. Li Wei and Zhou Diyi (1983) believe that it is effective to compare Chinese and English with traditional cultural knowledge in the process of English teaching in middle schools.

In the 1980s, with the further development of China's reform and opening-up policy, intercultural communication skills have received unprecedented attention. In the late 1990s, books on intercultural communication began to be published. In 1988, the book *Intercultural Communication and English Learning* (Hu Wenzhong) was published, which included 11 papers on intercultural communicative competence, and was the first book to introduce the cross-cultural communication in domestic English teaching in detail. In 2000, the Ministry of Education promulgated the teaching syllabus for foreign language majors. The syllabus clearly stated that students' intercultural communicative competence should be cultivated. At the same time, since the beginning of basic education reform in 2000, English-based subjects have been emphasized in the curriculum goals. For the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence, since then, researchers have paid more attention to the study of intercultural communicative competence.

On the basis of the above research, more and more linguists abroad have begun to pay attention to cultural teaching, and the resulting theories have had a profound impact on foreign language teaching in the United States and Europe. Therefore, it is necessary for us to learn from the development process

of American intercultural communication, so as to solve the current cultural exchange conflicts, realize benign intercultural communication activities.

2.3. Researches on cultivating intercultural communicative competence of junior high school students at home

2.3.1. Overview of the study

On CNKI, an advanced search was carried out with the keywords of “intercultural communication competence” and “junior high school”. Through reading, the author initially learns that the retrieved articles are all related to English subjects, so they could be reserved. From 2003 to 2020, there are a total of 29 articles, of which only two are from CSSCI or the core of Peking University. From the total number of published papers, it can be seen that scholars at home have not paid enough attention to the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence of junior high school students. From the lack of the number of core journals, it can be seen that the quality of research on the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence of junior high school students is not high enough.

Through in-depth reading of the literature, it can be found that the main research content of these literature is to put forward teaching suggestions or measures to cultivate junior high school students’ intercultural communication competence. For example, Xu Xiaohong (2020) proposes five ways to improve junior high school students’ intercultural communication competence: under the premise of careful study of the content of the textbook, optimizing and integrating teaching contents; designing an all-English classroom; creating a specific communication situation; paying attention to the contrast between Chinese and Western culture; carrying out extracurricular learning activities.

2.3.2. Insufficiency of the study

From the above research analysis, it is easy to find that the current research has the following problems. There is insufficient research on the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence of junior high school students. The research focus of domestic scholars is still high school students and college students, and the amount of research at this stage of junior high school is very limited; the quality of research needs to be improved, because the number of core journals is very small, and most of the authors of the article are middle school teachers, which shows the quality of research has a lot of room for improvement; The basic theoretical research is relatively lacking, and the theoretical value of the research is not high; the research methods need to be more abundant. In the retrieved literature, empirical research is lacking, and most of the research methods are case studies, that is, to put forward strategies for cultivating students’ intercultural communication competence, and then illustrate teaching instructions to explain in detail. The author believes that with the introduction of English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022) and the emphasis on cultivating students’ intercultural communication competence in the curriculum objectives, more scholars will pay attention to the research on the cultivation of junior high school students’ intercultural communicative competence.

3. Current Situation of Junior High School Students’ Intercultural Communicative Competence

3.1. Weak awareness of intercultural communication

“Adjustment and Communication” in the objectives of the cultural awareness section requires students to recognize the importance of effective intercultural communication and “Perception and Internalization” requires students to understand and appreciate excellent traditional Chinese and foreign cultures, but the reality is not. Wang Xinfan’s (2021) survey finds that in the traditional language learning situation for junior high school students, they do not investigate and solve problems from the aspects of western culture, thought, and behavior, but still at the level of Chinese thinking. The awareness and ability of cross-cultural communication are insufficient. Liu Wenqin (2020) finds in her survey that students tend to forget the cultural identity of their communication partners, ignore the cultural differences between China and the West, and lack intercultural awareness. Chen Jihao (2021) finds that most students lack the initiative to communicate. In his research, most of the students think that the purpose of learning English is to cope with exams, not to learn English cultural knowledge and develop English intercultural communication competence. In the process of communication, students cannot flexibly adjust their communication behavior. At the same time, most students find it difficult to adjust their communicative behavior according to the cultural background of both parties.

3.2. Lack of intercultural knowledge

“Comparison and Judgment” in the objectives of the cultural awareness section requires students to be able to obtain and summarize information about Chinese and foreign cultures and to understand different cultures, but the survey shows that students’ cross-cultural knowledge is lacking. Da Wen, Zhu Jun, and Han Yanhong (2014) find that students’ knowledge of Chinese and Western cultures is insufficient, and most students do not understand deep cultural knowledge such as historical traditions and values. They are not clear and ambiguous to some simple, common sense cultural knowledge. Wang Xinfan (2021) finds after investigation that despite passing the English course in primary school, junior high school students are without a systematic and in-depth understanding of Western history and geography, customs, traditional culture and customs, cultural and traditional arts, daily life, behavioral norms, and cultural knowledge of values. It is difficult for them to effectively distinguish the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures. Chen Jihao (2021) refers that most students lack understanding of historical figures and events, literary works and important writers in the culture of English-speaking countries.

3.3. Insufficient cultural communicative competence

Chen Jihao’s (2021) research shows that most students cannot describe a thing to others in English or use euphemisms. There are still many grammatical mistakes in communication. The coherence of oral expression is not good, and they cannot express their thoughts and opinions fluently. Students have many problems in communication strategies. For example, they cannot find similar words to replace when

they encounter words that cannot be expressed. Most students even speak Chinese unconsciously. The above content indicates that the students' intercultural communicative competence at this stage cannot meet the "Adjustment and Communication" of the cultural awareness stage goal, because students cannot choose appropriate communication strategies, nor can they correct their mistakes in time.

4. Analysis of the Reasons for Current Situation

4.1. From the school's point of view

With the continuous development of curriculum reform and the requirements of national policies for cultural exchanges and the dissemination of excellent Chinese culture, schools have paid more attention to cultivating students' intercultural communication skills. However, the emphasis from the school has not reached the ideal level. For example, more and more schools have begun to offer international understanding courses, but the understanding of the courses is only at the level of allowing students to understand the general situation of English-speaking countries, and has not yet penetrated into the understanding of their cultures, let alone the realization of cultural communication. There are still many schools that have not yet offered courses to improve students' intercultural communication competence. In addition, many junior high schools rarely organize cultural activities related to English, such as English speech contests, English corners, English reading clubs, etc. Many junior high schools still rank the importance of student test scores at the top of the list.

4.2. From the teacher's point of view

4.2.1. Insufficient awareness of teachers on cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence

The current situation of intercultural English teaching in junior high schools is not optimistic. The main reason is that most teachers have insufficient intercultural teaching awareness, and the cultivation of students' English ability is mostly for exam preparation, and it is rare to integrate cross-cultural knowledge into the classroom. Test scores are still an important basis for measuring students' English learning level and learning status. Under the command of the high-stakes examination of the senior high school entrance examination, most teachers still regard English language knowledge as the focus of classroom teaching. In such an environment for education, it is difficult for teachers to improve their awareness of intercultural communication teaching, to change the original teaching concepts and methods, and it is difficult for English teaching to achieve the real purpose of communication.

4.2.2. Limited teaching ability to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence

With the development of the English subject curriculum reform, the curriculum standards emphasizes the cultivation of students' intercultural communication ability, and English teachers pay more and more attention to the cultivation of this ability in teaching, but the process and effect are not satisfactory, mainly because teachers teach a small range of relevant knowledge, and the teaching methods are single and tedious. Liu Wenqin (2020) finds that when teachers teach cross-culturally, they mostly use their own oral narration and questioning methods, and at the same time rely on visual materials such as videos and pictures, the teaching activities are relatively simple and lack novelty. In addition, teachers'

intercultural teaching lacks systematic planning. What should be taught and how to teach in intercultural teaching are generally decided by the teacher personally. Teachers usually choose the content of intercultural according to their personal experience, hobbies, and values. In most cases, this kind of intercultural teaching is not closely related to the language teaching in class, and are often regarded as "off-topic" for language teaching. This kind of subjectivity and lack of systematic planning and guidance in intercultural teaching can easily lead to students' one-sided understanding of the culture of English-speaking countries, form prejudice against the target language culture, and hinder the improvement of students' intercultural communicative competence.

4.2.3. Teachers' own lack of intercultural communicative competence

Due to the high requirements for scores in the current social environment, teachers are faced with huge pressure for further studies, busy with tedious teaching work, focusing on improving students' test scores, and have no time to take into account the cultivation of intercultural communication competence. Teaching reflection is not timely, professional learning is not enough, teachers' theoretical knowledge cannot keep pace with the times. Their own awareness, knowledge and skills of intercultural communication are lacking, so they encounter difficulties in practical teaching, leading to a series of problems in cultivating students' intercultural competence. Zhang Manyue (2020) found that teachers' own intercultural communication competence are insufficient and their knowledge of cross-cultural communication is relatively small. Therefore, teachers' explanations of cultural knowledge in class are not detailed enough, and the supplementary cultural materials are not in-depth enough, which is surely not conducive to cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence.

4.3. From the student's point of view

4.3.1. Lack of motivation or interest in promoting one's own intercultural communicative competence

Most students think that learning English is necessary for taking the senior high school entrance examination, going abroad or working in the future. This understanding highlights the instrumental value of English as a language and relatively ignores its humanistic value. The actual level of the current junior high school students has not yet reached the requirements of the goal of cultural awareness. The lack of intercultural awareness in the concept of English learning is largely due to the fact that they still do not know the difference and connection between English and English learning, so they can't find their own purpose for learning English except for the high school entrance examination, work, and going abroad. Therefore, students pay special attention to the test scores, pay attention to the mastery of English knowledge, but ignore the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence.

4.3.2. Limited ability of English learning

The learning of language knowledge and the development of language skills of junior high school students and personal language ability have a great influence on intercultural communicative competence, mainly as follows: students who lack vocabulary and grammar knowledge lack intercultural communicative competence and confidence, while Students with better language knowledge have stronger confidence in intercultural communication. As mentioned above, in addition to knowledge and awareness, skills in intercultural communication are also very important. Skills refer to

achieving a certain communication purpose through appropriate communication methods, but appropriate communication methods are very lacking for junior high school students. Therefore, this will also affect the confidence and motivation of students in intercultural communication learning, thereby affecting the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence.

4.3.3. Lack of practical experience or environment for the development of intercultural communicative competence

In current English teaching, junior high school students can obtain intercultural knowledge through the explanations of teachers in class, watching film and television works, browsing the Internet, reading books after class, etc. The learning methods are rich and diverse, but the methods are limited to this, which will inevitably make students lose the sense of freshness, and teachers' explanations or students' self-study after class are easy to stay on the surface of cultural phenomena, and it is difficult to understand them deeply. Students just store it in their minds as static and isolated declarative knowledge, while without actively mobilizing the participation of various senses such as listening, speaking, reading, and watching, applying the knowledge learned in relatively real English situations, and adding the dynamic and interactive nature of knowledge through personal practice, so intercultural knowledge stays on the surface, it gradually becomes blurred or even forgotten as time goes by, and it is difficult to promote and inspire each other with intercultural behavior. Especially since the outbreak of COVID-19, there have been very few opportunities for students to go abroad to participate in summer camps, winter camps, and study tours. Therefore, they lack the environment or experience for language interaction and cultural exchange, so it is difficult to cultivate intercultural communicative competence.

5. Suggestions for Improving Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence

According to the three goals of the new curriculum standard (2022) for the cultural awareness from Grade 7 to Grade 9, combined with the problems and reasons of intercultural communicative competence of junior high school students mentioned above, the author tries to put forward the following suggestions to help teachers in the teaching process to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence.

5.1. Finding similarities and differences to realize "Comparison and Judgment"

Discovering similarities and differences means that teachers need to guide students to discover the differences and similarities between Chinese culture and other cultures. Before making comparisons, teachers need to guide students to understand themselves, that is, to stimulate students' previous knowledge. Facilitating the reception of new knowledge through students' experiences and insights. The introduction and reception of new knowledge can also stimulate students' interest and make students more immersed in cross-cultural communication activities.

5.2. Communicating appropriately to achieve "Adjustment and Communication"

In order to accomplish this goal, teachers need to pay

attention to cultivating students' pragmatic ability, create real situations, and make students be able to use appropriate expressions in different environments and situations. First of all, it is necessary to cultivate students' oral expression ability in the usual listening and speaking classes, so that students have basic communication skills. Secondly, by creating different situations, students can understand how to properly express in different situations to achieve the aim of communication. Then, in this process, teachers need to let students know certain communication skills and strategies, such as politeness principle, cooperation principle and so on.

5.3. Investigating the reasons to attain "Perception and Internalization"

After comparing the similarities and differences between different cultures, teachers need to guide students to explore the reasons for these similarities and differences, conduct more in-depth study and understanding, perceive different cultural connotations, and truly understand, tolerate, and empathize with different cultures, learn to see things from the perspective of others, rather than negatively resisting cultures that are different from theirs.

6. Conclusion

Based on *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022)*, the target requirements of Cultural Awareness from Grade 7 to Grade 9, namely "Comparison and Judgment", "Adjustment and Communication", "Perception and Internalization", it is found that the intercultural communicative competence of junior high school students in China is insufficient: 1) weak awareness of intercultural communication; 2) lack of intercultural knowledge; 3) insufficient cultural communicative competence. The author analyzes the reasons for these deficiencies from three aspects: schools, teachers, and students. Among them, schools still attach the most importance to students' grades because of the influence of the high-stakes examination of the senior high school entrance examination. For teachers, it is because: 1) insufficient awareness of teachers on cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence; 2) limited teaching ability to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence; 3) teachers' own lack of intercultural communicative competence. From the student's point of view: 1) lack of motivation or interest in promoting one's own intercultural communicative competence; 2) limited ability of English learning; 3) lack of practical experience or environment for the development of intercultural communicative competence. Finally, according to the requirements of Cultural Awareness in three stages, the author puts forward the following teaching suggestion: 1) finding similarities and differences to realize "Comparison and Judgment"; 2) communicating appropriately to achieve "Adjustment and Communication"; 3) investigating the reasons to attain "Perception and Internalization". It is hoped that in the future, schools and teachers can pay attention to the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence, implement the goal of morality education, achieve the goals and requirements of the new curriculum standards, and cultivate talents with sufficient intercultural communicative competence for the country to tell Chinese stories well, spread excellent Chinese culture, and promote cultural integration.

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