

The Development Situation and Cultivating Strategies of Intercultural Communication Competence in Junior High School English Teaching

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Abstract: In today's accelerated globalization process, the links between countries are becoming increasingly close. The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) also sets out new requirements for students' intercultural communication competence. The relationship between language and culture is reflected behind intercultural communication competence, and the development of students' intercultural communication competence is valued by educational circles at home and abroad. Therefore, this paper discusses the current situation of the development of English intercultural communication competence in junior high schools from three perspectives, that are schools, teachers and students.

Keywords: Junior High School English; Intercultural Communication Competence; Development Strategies.

1. Introduction

The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China formulated and issued the *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition)* [1] in April 2022. This new curriculum standard provides a reference standard for the preparation of teaching materials and the design of examination papers at the compulsory education level nationwide, and points out the direction and puts forward clearer requirements for the development of students' intercultural communication awareness and competence at the compulsory education level (Jiang, 2023). *The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition)* states that compulsory education should cultivate students' cultural awareness, requiring them to be able to understand the outstanding civilizational achievements of different countries and to be able to compare these cultures between Chinese and foreign cultures, to develop the competence to communicate and exchange under different cultural background, to establish an international perspective, and to have firm cultural confidence. It can thus be seen that with the changes in the international and domestic situation today, people have become fully aware of the importance of intercultural knowledge and have put forward certain requirements for intercultural communication competence.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Definition of Key Words

2.1.1. Culture

The concept of culture is various, and there is still no a unified academic definition of the term "culture". The word "culture" has its origins in ancient Greece, but the word originally meant "to cultivate". Later the English words "physical culture", "horticulture" and "agriculture" were all expanded upon. The term "physical culture", "horticulture", "agriculture" and so on were all developed on the basis of it. From the 18th century onwards, scholars have been defining culture. In order to clarify the existing academic views, the following is a collation of academic definitions of 'culture' in

China and abroad:

1. In the 1990s, the Chinese scholar Qian Mu [2] pointed out that "culture must begin with human life, and without life, there is no culture. Culture is the whole of human life, and the whole of human life brought together is culture".

2. According to Liang Shuming [3], culture is the style of life. The definition of culture should include politics, economy and everything else.

3. Edward Taylor[4], an English anthropologist, in his book *Primitive Culture*, states "that culture and civilization are a combination of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and any other faculties and habits acquired by individuals as members of society".

4. Camilleri[5] defines culture as a "large culture" in terms of macro factors and a "small culture" in terms of specific factors in life.

5. Nida[6] defines culture as all learned behavior acquired by society.

6. Larry A. Samovar & Richard E. Porter[7] point out that "culture" is not innate, but needs to be acquired through learning, and that as human civilization passes from generation to generation, 'culture' is also".

Samovar and Porter[8] argue that culture is acquired, inherited, and subordinated, and is based on elements that continue to produce new cultural elements as society evolves.

This shows that although the definition of culture varies between Chinese and foreign academics, the following elements are present: (1) culture is closely related to human life; (2) culture can be acquired through social life; and (3) culture reflects the values shared by a group.

2.1.2. Intercultural Communication Competence

As with "culture", there are many different definitions of "intercultural communication competence" in academic circles.

Kim[9] suggests that the ability to communicate culturally between different cultural groups is intercultural competence, which is not natural, but is acquired and internalized by different groups through communication and exploration, and helps to achieve cross-cultural conflict resolution.

Gudykunst [10] argues that in intercultural communication, six factors - self-perception, communication context,

motivation to interact with the communicator, connection to the communicator, social identity of the communicator and reaction to the communicator - influence the effectiveness of intercultural communication.

Deardorff[11] argues that the most recognized definition of intercultural communication competence is the competence to communicate effectively and appropriately based on different cultures, skills and attitudes in different cultural communication practices.

Sun Qiong and Zhao Chun-Chang [12] argue that intercultural communication competence is a natural ability developed by different cultural groups to achieve the purpose of communication. In other words, the purpose of intercultural communication can only be achieved if intercultural communicative competence is present.

2.2. Review of the Literature

2.2.1. The Current Situation of Domestic Research on Intercultural Communication

Domestic research on intercultural communication competence started late, but due to the increasing links between China and foreign countries, more and more people are recognizing the importance of culture in communication with foreign languages. Since the 1990s, some scholars have begun to recognize the problem of neglecting the cultural factor in foreign language teaching in China.

Gao Yihong [13] from the English Department of Peking University points out in "The Cultivation of Intercultural communication competence: 'Crossing' and 'Transcending'" that in the current English teaching in China, "crossing" is the main focus of cultural teaching, but "transcendence" should be a more important educational goal.

Liu Dongmei [14] argues that cross-cultural awareness should be integrated into the daily teaching of English at the junior high school level, so that students can learn about English culture through various activities and help them improve their own English communication skills to truly achieve the ultimate goal of English teaching.

Qi Dongdong [15] suggests that cultivating intercultural communication competence has become an important topic in the field of English teaching at this stage, and creates a direct link with students' future development.

Huang Lin [16] points out that as exchanges between China and other countries have become more frequent in recent years, higher requirements have been put forward for people's intercultural communication competence, and foreign language teaching needs to provide society with more talents who have intercultural communication competence.

This shows that the domestic education sector has a unified understanding of the importance of intercultural communication competence and is discussing how to effectively improve students' intercultural communication competence in order to achieve the ultimate goal of foreign language education.

2.2.2. The Current Situation of Foreign Research on Intercultural Communication

Research on intercultural communication first emerged in the United States in the late 1950s. The United States was initially a country of immigrants from different nations, with different cultural backgrounds, so how to manage the relationship between these cultures became one of the key concerns of the Americans. However, there is still no single academic definition of intercultural communication competence.

Contrastive linguistics was first proposed by Lado[18], who argued for a comparative analysis of different cultures on three levels: form, meaning and distribution.

Schmidt[19] designed a multicultural literacy learning system based on basic knowledge of cultural understanding and communication. Learners also gained insights and an awareness of themselves and others based on the completion of assignments.

Paik et al.[20] have conducted a qualitative case study at Claremont University in the USA, which showed that increased intercultural communicative competence promotes the development of professional knowledge and teaching skills in English.

In summary, language and culture are complementary and cannot be separated from each other, and language has an influential role in the development of thinking. Therefore, in secondary school English teaching, teachers should emphasize the importance cultural background knowledge, so that students can have an international perspective, develop intercultural communication competence and cultivate talents for the construction of the community of human destiny.

2.3. Theoretical Foundations

2.3.1. Constructivist Theory

The concept of constructivist theory was pioneered by the Swiss scholar Jean Piaget.

Socrates and Plato were the earliest constructivists, and Socrates' maternity technique in particular is undoubtedly a successful example of constructivist teaching. Piaget was the forerunner of modern constructivism. He conducted a systematic study of children's cognitive development and argued that the essence of cognition (or intelligence) is adaptation, i.e. children's cognitive reality is based on pre-existing schemata and continues to develop from lower to higher levels through mechanisms such as assimilation, conformity and balance. This is at the heart of the constructivist perspective. Vygotsky gives more prominence to the significance of the learner's subjectivity in a cultural context. He advocates historical research as a basic principle of human psychology and proposes a 'historical-cultural theory of psychological development', arguing that the higher mental functions of human beings are the product of social history, and that human social culture plays an important role in human psychological development and social interaction. Vygotsky and Piaget were both important representatives of the same period of constructivism, but Vygotsky's theory placed more emphasis on the impact of culture and society on children's cognitive development.

The constructivist view of knowledge is that knowledge is only an interpretation of objective reality, and not the final answer to a question. Therefore, knowledge cannot accurately summarize the laws of the world and needs to be recreated for specific situations in specific problems. Due to socio-cultural differences, individuals will have different experiential backgrounds and, accordingly, different learners will have different understandings of the same proposition.

Therefore, in the development of intercultural communication competence in the junior high school English classroom, teaching should stimulate students' previous relevant knowledge experiences, promote the "growth" of knowledge experiences and students' knowledge construction activities, in order to facilitate the re-organization, transformation and transformation of knowledge experiences. At the same time, teaching should also create authentic

learning situations for students, stimulate their higher-level thinking activities such as reasoning and analysis, and provide rich intercultural communication resources and appropriate assistance to develop students' intercultural communication competence in different contexts.

2.3.2. Intercultural Communication Theory

Intercultural communication refers to the use of the same language by people from different cultural backgrounds, and Edward Hall pioneered the theory of intercultural communication in 1959 and advanced the study of intercultural communication. In 1983, Gudykunst's study of intercultural communication theory marked the emergence of intercultural communication as a mature and independent discipline, and Wood[21] pointed out that language is a carrier of culture and is closely related to Culture is closely related to culture. It is through language that culture can be transmitted outwards, culture is the largest system that influences communication, and all human interaction takes place within culture.

Intercultural communication enables people to master the differences between the cultures of different countries, thus avoiding and reducing cultural conflicts. In addition, it can also facilitate international political, cultural and economic exchanges.

3. Current Situation of the Development of Intercultural Communication Competence in Middle School English

3.1. The Learning Atmosphere of Intercultural Communication Knowledge in Schools is not Strong Enough

The school environment plays a very important role in the growth, learning and development of students. A positive and good school environment can provide students with a good learning atmosphere, promote the establishment of students' learning habits, help them establish correct values, stimulate their interest in learning, improve their learning efficiency, cultivate their ability to think independently and promote their all-round development. However, due to the shortcomings of the exam-oriented education system, most English teachers currently focus on the teaching of language knowledge and the development of students' reading skills in English classes, but hardly ever on intercultural communication knowledge. As a result, schools do not pay much attention to developing students' intercultural communication competence, which leads to a lack of enthusiasm and a feeling among students that intercultural communication competence are not important.

3.2. Teachers' Intercultural Knowledge Base is Inadequate

The teacher is the one who teaches and solves problems. Only when a teacher has a large enough knowledge base can he or she be able to teach students comfortably. However, the current situation shows that most teachers do not have enough intercultural knowledge themselves. Some teachers do not even have any intercultural awareness at all. In the English classroom, many knowledge points involving foreign cultures are ignored by the teacher. Even if they do explain, they just talk from the book and do not expand on it, making it impossible for students to understand, which is one of the

shortcomings in the development of intercultural communication competence.

3.3. Students' Initiative in Learning Intercultural Knowledge is Poor

The term "learning initiative" refers to the ability of students to think, ask questions and explore issues consciously and actively, under the domination of their subjective consciousness, in order to gain new knowledge and experience. Learning initiative is a way of thinking and a learning habit that is developed through students' independent choice and control of the learning process. In the development of intercultural communication competence, the learning initiative of secondary school students has much to do with it. According to the cognitive development of secondary school students, they are very curious about new things at this stage, which means that they are very interested in learning about other cultures and are willing to do so.

4. Strategies for Developing Intercultural Communication Competence in Junior Secondary English

4.1. Teachers

4.1.1. Enriching Their Own Intercultural Knowledge

On the one hand, teachers should enhance their learning of their own culture. A good English teacher should not only have solid professional knowledge and knowledge related to pedagogy, but should also have a good understanding of the culture of his or her country. Whether it is mentioned in the textbook or needs to be expanded, teachers need to master it. Some teachers, for example, do not even know what the traditional Chinese festivals are, and that is not good enough. Only if teachers know enough about their own culture can they have a strong sense of cultural identity and be able to influence their students' intercultural awareness. On the other hand, teachers also need to enhance their study of foreign cultures. It is not enough to master one's own culture in order to develop students' intercultural communication competence. Language and culture are inextricably linked. Only when one understands the historical and cultural background of the target language can one learn and use the target language better. This is also true in the teaching of intercultural knowledge in foreign languages. A teacher's deep cultural background can make him more comfortable in the English classroom. The teacher can deepen his understanding of foreign cultures through external study, reading books, activities organized by the school and the Education Department, and by choosing to study abroad.

4.1.2. Diversification of Teaching Methods

Chinese and English are two different languages, and there are significant differences between Chinese culture and that of Western countries. When teaching classroom content, teachers can make appropriate additions and use comparative teaching methods to enable students to understand the differences between Chinese and Western cultures in a more intuitive way. For example, when teaching the word "color", teachers can add some comparisons between the Chinese and Western cultures in terms of color, such as red in Western culture refers to the color of blood, symbolizing danger, terror, violence and bloodshed, while in China, red symbolizes festivity, good luck, beauty and prosperity, for example, when

Chinese people have a happy event, they will set up a red scene. Again, white is a favorite color in the West, symbolizing purity, e.g. a bride's white wedding dress in a wedding; but in traditional Chinese culture, white is a derogatory word, an emergency color in traditional Chinese culture, symbolizing sadness and failure, e.g. a white dress in a funeral. Also, yellow and blue have different meanings in Chinese and Western cultures, so students can find out for themselves.

4.2. Students

4.2.1. Develop Your Own Intercultural Interests

Internal motivation to learn leads to students persisting and enjoying doing something for longer. The internal motivation to learn is usually generated because of interest. So how can students develop their own cross-cultural interests? Students can take the initiative to be more exposed to British and American originals, such as newspapers, magazines, films, television and the Internet, in order to appreciate the customs, language and behavior of British and American countries, and to appreciate the differences between British and American culture and Chinese culture. Exposure to original British and American films and magazines, etc. will make it easier for students to understand the cultural differences and to develop a sense of intercultural communication.

4.2.2. Getting Rid of the Stereotypical Thinking of the Mother Tongue

Most students have been influenced by the stereotypical thinking of their mother tongue for a long time in their English learning [21]. There are major differences in syntactic structure between Chinese and English; for example, English prefers the passive voice in sentences, while Chinese prefers the active voice. Secondly, there are also major differences in the ways of thinking between Chinese and Westerners; for example, in English texts the topic sentence is usually written in an open-ended manner, while Chinese texts tend to be more inclined to indirect thinking, describing the external environment before pointing out the topic sentence. Stereotypical thinking has many negative effects on English learning. Due to the influence of the native language mindset, students tend to place too much emphasis on grammar at the expense of grasping the language as a whole. Therefore, it is beneficial for learners to get rid of their native language stereotypical thinking in English learning in order to clear the obstacles in reading English and improve their intercultural communication competence.

5. Conclusion

Cultural factors are often overlooked in the study of language learning. However, cultural factors implicitly influence language learners' beliefs and expectations of learning at every stage. The cultural information imparted by language is an important part of the content of English teaching that cannot be ignored, and English teaching is not only language teaching, but should also include cultural education.

Therefore, in junior high school English classrooms, intercultural communication should be given attention by everyone. According to the current situation, the development of junior high school students' intercultural communication competence is not optimistic and has not been given enough attention by schools, teachers and students themselves. According to the new standards for the development of

students' core literacy, students' language skills are very important. What society needs today is a new generation with an international outlook, a socialist successor who can contribute to the building of a community of human destiny. Therefore, schools should enrich their intercultural resources in terms of hardware and facilities and create a strong atmosphere for learning intercultural knowledge; teachers need to enrich their own intercultural knowledge base and teaching methods and adopt more comparative teaching methods so that students can more clearly recognize the cultural differences between China and the West; as for the students themselves, they need to cultivate their own intercultural interests as much as possible and take the initiative to get in touch with foreign cultures, as well as to They should also get rid of the influence of their native language stereotypical thinking on them.

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