

The Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Competence in the Unit Integrity Teaching of the Primary English

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Abstract: As China's international status rises, the country needs more and more talents with intercultural communication skills. This paper finds that primary school English teaching materials neglect the cultivation of students' intercultural communication competence, teachers lack the awareness of intercultural communication, teachers' own intercultural literacy is insufficient, and students lack the interest of intercultural communication. The author puts forward suggestions on these aspects, hoping to provide help for elementary school English teachers regarding the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence.

Keywords: The Primary English; Unit Integrity Teaching; Intercultural Communication Competence.

1. Introduction

English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) points out that learning and using English helps students understand different cultures, gradually form the awareness and ability of intercultural communication, learn to view the world objectively and rationally, establish an international vision, cultivate patriotism, strengthen cultural self-confidence, and form a correct world view, outlook on life and values. The English curriculum is both instrumental and humanistic. Learning a language is not only for students to learn language and culture, but also to let students develop the ability of how to use language for intercultural communication. Also, the theory of second language acquisition proposes that there is a critical period for second language acquisition, and the best period to learn a foreign language is before the age of 12. Therefore, research about teaching needs to pay more attention to students' English learning and intercultural communication skills in primary education, so as to lay a solid foundation for students' future development.

2. Literature Review

(1) Unit Integrity Teaching

As for the conceptions of Unit Integrity Teaching, many experts express their views.

Hu Run, Chen Xinzong (2020) think that the Unit Integrity Teaching is based on the unit, according to a certain logic, after fully analyzing the curriculum standards, teaching materials and students' learning situation, clarify the unit theme, determine the unit objectives, integrate the unit content, and design learning activities. Li Baorong (2022) proposes that The Unit Integrity Teaching is based on the teaching materials, and the internal related content of the teaching materials is analyzed, reorganized, integrated and formed into a relatively complete teaching unit by the method of system theory, and the teaching elements are planned in an orderly manner under the guidance of the overall view of teaching to optimize teaching effects. Guan Xiaoli (2023) points out that Unit Integrity Teaching is a new teaching method based on holistic teaching and based on Gestalt

psychology. Among them, Unit Integrity Teaching takes teaching as an integral tool and by constructing students' cognitive structure, students can show their self-worth in learning, grow in the inspiration and guidance of teachers, and complete teaching goals.

It can be seen from the three scholars' that the Unit Integrity Teaching is the teaching process that a teacher who takes unit teaching as a module, consciously integrates teaching resources around the unit theme, explores the role of these teaching resources in knowledge, ability and emotion, and carries out teaching design from a macro perspective to promote the improvement of students' core literacy.

Also, the author summarizes the following characteristics of the unit integrity teaching.

Firstly, integrity. The unit integrity teaching does not simply integrate the knowledge points of the unit to be taught, but grasps the theme of the unit and the main idea of the text on the basis of integrating the key points of the unit, so that students can summarize the different meanings of the text and grasp the core points of the unit theme by themselves after learning the unit, thus achieving a higher level of learning. (Hong Hui, 2023)

Secondly, correlation. The unit integrity teaching takes the unit as the subject teaching unit, emphasizes the unit to be presented in the form of the whole, and pays attention to the internal relationship of each section and lesson of the unit. The Unit Integrity Teaching not only maintains the independence of each lesson of the unit, but also pays attention to the interpenetration, circulation and promotion of core knowledge and skills. When designing teaching, teachers should not only consider the content of the unit, but also make internal and external connections between the English learning activities to form a spiraling "task chain", enhancing students' experience in the process of language learning, and ultimately helping students form and improve their language use ability. (Yang Liuqing, 2020)

Therefore, primary school English teachers should firmly grasp these three characteristics when teaching the whole unit.

(2) Intercultural Communication Competence

Before defining intercultural communication competence, we should first know what intercultural communication is.

Edward Twitchell Hall Jr., father of intercultural communication, says that culture is communication, and communication is culture. The first half of the sentence refers to the characteristics of culture, that is, culture needs to be nurtured by international relations and passed on through communication. And the second half of the sentence is about the characteristics of communication, that is, culture has an impact on the way of communication. Therefore, intercultural communication refers to communication between native and non-native speakers, as well as between any person with differences in language and cultural background. Generally speaking, it is about what problems should be paid attention to and how to express ourselves appropriately when making contact with foreigners.

Having provided the definition of intercultural communication, let's talk about intercultural communication competence. Spitzberg thinks that intercultural communication competence in a broad sense refers to the appropriateness and effectiveness of human behavior in a given context. That means when make contact with other language speaks, what we say and what we act do not offense them. Chen Guohua adds Spitzberg's definition of intercultural competence, which he argues Intercultural communication competence is the ability to effectively and appropriately complete communicative behaviors in a given environment in order to obtain an expected response. Chen proposes that intercultural communication competence is not only speak and act appropriately but also get responses from people of different cultures.

In order to develop students' intercultural competence in teaching, we must know what constitutes intercultural competence.

Lustig Koester (1993) argues that sufficient knowledge, appropriate motivations, and well-trained actions are the three elements of cross-cultural competence, and that any single factor of these three elements is not sufficient to form intercultural competence. Byram M's intercultural communication competence consists of four elements: attitude, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness (1977). In this article, the author adopts Byram's views on the elements of intercultural communication competence. In term of intercultural communication attitude, it refers to maintaining curiosity, openness and willingness to trust both one's own culture and other cultures in intercultural communication; in term of intercultural communication knowledge, it means the ability to understand and compare the two cultures and the general process of communication between groups and individuals; in term of intercultural communication skill, it refers to the ability to discover and interpret another culture and in term of critical cultural awareness, it refers to the ability to think outside of one's box and see things from a different perspective.

After the literature review above, the unit integrity teaching breaks the traditional fragmented knowledge-intensive teaching model, emphasizes the relevance of texts within the unit, and each unit revolves around a determined theme to explore and create an authentic language environment. And it is not difficult to see that through the unit integrity teaching of primary school English to cultivate intercultural competence, teachers must deeply analyze the teaching materials, find the relevance and stratification of the texts in the unit, create a real intercultural communication environment, cultivate students' attitude towards intercultural communication, let students master intercultural

communication knowledge and skills, and finally gradually let students develop a sense of cultural criticism.

3. Significance

The new English curriculum standard proposes to develop students' core competence, and cultural awareness is one of the core competences of the English subject. And the cultivation of students' cultural awareness cannot be separated from the cultivation of intercultural communication competence.

The significance of developing students' intercultural communication competence in unit integrity teaching of elementary school English reflects on the following aspects.

Firstly, enhance students' intercultural awareness. The intercultural awareness refers to the ability to accept and respect the differences of different cultures. Intercultural awareness includes knowledge and understanding of one's own culture and the cultures of others, as well as an understanding of the interactions and influences between cultures. By learning about the cultural backgrounds, customs and values of different countries and regions, students can enhance their knowledge and understanding of multiculturalism and develop a sense of respect and tolerance for different cultures, which help students avoid misunderstandings, prejudices and cultural conflicts.

Secondly, improve students' intercultural communication skills. Students are able to improve their intercultural communication skills, learn to respect the views and customs of others, and effectively solve problems in intercultural communication. For example, the British language is more subtle, and when they say "interesting", they may be expressing how boring it is. If we do not master intercultural communication skills, we are likely to misunderstand what they are expressing and cause conflicts.

Thirdly, cultivate an international perspective. The demand for talents with international perspective has become stronger in all walks of life, and those with international perspective will have a higher platform, wider opportunities and greater achievements. Therefore, it is especially important to develop students' international perspective in English teaching. Students are able to broaden their horizons, learn about the diversity and complexity of the world, and develop an international mindset and perspective.

Fourthly, enhance students' self-confidence and independent learning ability. Through communication and cooperation with foreigners, students can improve their English speaking ability, enhance their self-confidence, stimulate their interest and motivation to learn, and develop their independent learning ability.

Finally, develop students' global competitiveness. With the development of globalization, intercultural communication skills have become an important professional literacy. And we can improve their global competitiveness and lay a good foundation for their future employment and development.

In conclusion, in today's society, intercultural communication competence is becoming increasingly important. Cultivating students' intercultural communication competence in the unit integrity teaching of English in elementary school is adapted to students' development, social development, and national development.

4. Problems

This paper summarizes the problems existing in the process

of cultivating students' intercultural communication competence in the unit integrity teaching of the primary English based on the literature review.

(1) The Neglect of Elementary School English Teaching Materials on Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence Cultivation.

New English curriculum standard mentions that learning and using English helps students to understand different cultures compare cultural similarities and differences, and gradually develop the awareness and ability of cross-cultural communication. It can be seen that the cultivation of primary school students' intercultural communication competence is becoming more and more important. At the same time, the new English curriculum standard points out that cultural knowledge includes not only knowledge of material culture such as food, clothing, architecture and transportation, but also knowledge of non-material culture such as philosophy, science, history, values and customs. The learning of cultural knowledge is not limited to understanding and memorizing specific knowledge points, but more importantly, discovering and judging the attitudes and values behind them. The new curriculum standards for English also make content requirements for cultural knowledge in compulsory education.

Cultural knowledge in elementary school English involves: firstly, the similarities and differences in expression between English and Chinese in interpersonal communication, such as names, titles, greetings, etc.; secondly, the similarities and differences in school life, family life, eating habits, etc. in different countries or cultures; thirdly, simple information on school life and traditional festivals of typical cultural markers of China and foreign countries; and fourthly, people's behaviors, living customs, eating habits, etiquette in treating others, and conversations to be avoided in different cultures, etc., which requires that, after the study of elementary school English course, the students are able to have a preliminary understanding of different cultures.

English textbooks that published by the version of Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press is the most utilized in the country. Taking the English textbook of the second book of the sixth grade as an example, the author found that the units involving cultural knowledge in the whole book only accounted for 33.3% as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Modules and topics of English textbooks published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press

Theme of the Module Content	Food
	Weather
	Animal
	Asking for help
	Musical instruments
	Transport
	Time
	Organ
	Goods
	Wish

As can be seen from the above table, cultural themes do not make up a high percentage of the textual content of the textbook. When relying on the textbook texts in unit integrity teaching, elementary school English teachers are unable to impart cultural knowledge to students, and students are unable to deepen their understanding of Chinese culture, so they can't master the foundation of cultural knowledge needed for intercultural communication, and are unable to accomplish intercultural communication successfully.

(2) Teachers' Lack of Awareness of Intercultural Communication Competence Cultivation

Due to the influence of traditional teaching as well as the examination-rooted teaching mode, elementary school English teachers pay more attention to the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and focus more on making students master various vocabularies, phrases and sentence patterns. Teachers seldom think of teaching English in a way that allows students to learn about cultures other than the text. At the same time, teachers are unable to integrate cultural knowledge into the unit integrity teaching. Because of the recent promotion of telling Chinese stories in English, teachers seem to be comfortable in dealing with their own culture. However, they seem to be careful when expanding on foreign cultures for fear of giving students wrong information and causing confusion in their thinking. Teachers' own insufficient knowledge base in intercultural communication also creates difficulties in the unit integrity teaching of elementary school to cultivate students' cross-cultural competence. This kind of teaching makes students lack knowledge and understanding of their own culture and the culture of the target language, and students are unable to learn about the customs, manners, and living characteristics of other countries in the process of language learning, which makes it impossible for students to fully acquire intercultural communicative knowledge.

(3) Teachers' insufficient penetration of culture in English language teaching.

Textbooks contain fewer units dealing with cultural knowledge, and teachers are dependent on the textbooks, which are not sufficiently infused with cultural knowledge. In actual teaching, students do not have cultural scaffolding, have sufficient cognitive understanding, it is difficult to internalize language knowledge and cross-cultural emotional experience into language application ability, which is not conducive to students' English learning. On the other hand, even though elementary school English teachers consciously develop cultural knowledge in the classroom, they are limited by the students' low language proficiency and choose to give up the teaching of cultural knowledge and focus on language knowledge.

Teachers often add cultural elements at the end of their teaching design in order to sublimate the theme. However, teachers always focus on the realization of humanistic feelings rather than the penetration of cultural knowledge. Take the example of unit 1 Module 6 Happy birthday of the version of Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. In this unit, the main focus is on learning about food on birthdays and birthday wishes for Sam from his friends. Birthdays are a day spent by people all over the world, when people express their good wishes to those who celebrate their birthdays. Teachers often ask students to think about what they would do on their birthday or ask them to express their feelings in that day in order to elevate the theme. From this example, we can see that elementary school English teachers do not penetrate the culture enough in their teaching. Birthday is a day known to people from different cultures, which contains rich cultural elements, and people from different cultures have different ways of celebrating birthdays. In China, people have the tradition of eating longevity noodles and eggs, while in the West, people usually eat cakes and blow out candles, and these activities have been introduced to China as countries interact with each other. At the end of the activity, the teachers did not provide the students with cultural

knowledge outside the classroom, and the students' cultural understanding of the theme of "birthday" was limited to the textbook.

(4) Students' low interest in intercultural communication

Intercultural communication activities require a high level of language proficiency, and students not only need to master the four major English learning skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, but also have rich cultural knowledge. Due to the insufficient development of cultural knowledge in the teaching materials, primary school students do not have rich cultural knowledge. At the same time, primary school students are often "teacher-oriented", they want to be praised by their teachers, and they want to be good students in the minds of their teachers. Since the homework assigned by English teachers usually does not involve cultural knowledge, students think that they can get the teacher's praise if they have completed what the teachers have assigned. Therefore, students are not interested in learning cultural knowledge. The last reason for students' low interest in intercultural communication is the lack of interesting intercultural communicative activities. Elementary school students are characterized by curiosity and love of games, and they prefer to acquire knowledge in funny learning activities. Therefore, teachers should design a variety of intercultural communicative activities so that students can establish intercultural communicative awareness, cultivate intercultural communicative attitude and internalize intercultural knowledge.

5. Suggestions

Above the author has analyzed the problems in the process of intercultural communication competence training in elementary school English unit teaching. Next, the author will address each problem and put forward suggestions for improvement, hoping to provide help for elementary school English teachers to cultivate students' intercultural communication competence.

Teachers make rational use of teaching materials to supplement cultural factors.

Language learning cannot be achieved without language scaffolding, and the primary English textbook is the textbook scaffolding for students to learn English, but this scaffolding does not manage to provide students with rich cultural knowledge. Therefore, teachers should learn to develop cultural resources outside the classroom.

First, grasp the content of the material from an integral perspective. Teachers should look at a semester or even a school year's textbooks as a whole, think about the cultural factors contained in each unit, and grasp the correlation and stratification between the cultural factors in each unit. For example, the first unit, "I want a hot dog, Please.", is about food and the second unit, "It will snow in Harbin", is about weather. Teacher can combine the cultural factors of these two units, so that students can know that different countries have different climates, and different climates grow different foods, resulting in different eating habits, and teachers can add what the eating habits of each country are. Teachers regard two units or more units of culture as an inseparable theme, which is the new standard advocated by the unit integrity teaching.

Secondly, with the development of the Internet, culture is also being updated. Teachers should make use of the rich resources on the Internet, and at the same time, they should change their thinking and choose novel cultures to attract the attention of primary school students. Outdated culture will

conflict with the popular culture that students are exposed to and confuse their thinking. For example, when introducing famous Chinese and foreign athletes and their perseverance, the English teacher chooses retired athletes such as Liu Xiang and Tian Liang. Nowadays, primary school students are children born after 2010, and they know very little about these people. As a result, the teachers are unable to arouse the students' empathy when teaching, resulting in a lack of teaching effect.

(1) Teachers should improve their intercultural communication competence.

Elementary school English teachers can handle the connection between lessons well when teaching the unit as a whole, so that students can learn under the theme of the unit, but they are often prone to neglecting the cross-cultural elements in the teaching process. As can be seen from the analysis of the reasons for the appeal, a large part of the reason is that the teachers themselves do not have enough intercultural communication literacy, do not set up intercultural communication awareness and lack intercultural communication knowledge and skills. Therefore, teachers should continuously improve their intercultural literacy.

Firstly, primary English teacher are supposed to establish intercultural communication awareness. Teachers should adjust their role position, they need to make it clear that elementary school English teachers play a foundational role in students' lifelong English learning, and that English teachers are not only language transmitters, but also disseminators of English-speaking countries' cultures. Teachers should attract the excellent culture of their own country and discover the excellent local culture. Native culture is more likely to be neglected in English teaching, but it is close to students' lives. Teachers should learn to attract other cultures and remove their backward parts. At the same time, teachers should keep a tolerant attitude towards different cultures and respect cultural differences. Only in this way can teachers lead by example.

Secondly, teachers should clarify the cultural content of their teaching and build a multicultural knowledge structure. Most of the culture exists in people's unconsciousness, and very often people do not realize it. The differences between Chinese and foreign cultures exist in every aspect of people's lives, and how primary English teachers can transfer it to the overall teaching of the unit is a problem that primary English teachers need to think about. For example, the first unit, "I am Sam", of the third grade English textbook published by the version of Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, reflects the difference in names between Chinese and English cultures. Teachers should not only make students aware of the rules of naming in Chinese and foreign languages, but also make them aware of the language communication habits of meeting and greeting in Chinese and foreign languages. At the same time, they should make the students realize what information should not be involved in the conversation when they are communicating with foreigners, so as to avoid cultural conflicts.

(2) Teachers should effectively infuse culture into the unit integrity teaching of elementary English.

Teachers should combine culture and teaching organically to improve students' enthusiasm for intercultural communication learning, enrich the teaching content, make students' understanding of English knowledge more in-depth, enhance their confidence in English learning, and lay a solid foundation for future English learning.

Firstly, Chinese and foreign cultures should be closely linked to classroom teaching. The penetration of culture can be unconscious. Teachers can add implicit cultural knowledge when conducting classroom teaching, so that students can learn cultural knowledge without feeling it. For example, in the unit "The name of the space is Shenzhou V.", teachers can let students know the origin the name Shenzhou V and background of Shenzhou V. launch. At the same time, teachers can add the information about the world's first spacecraft on the moon and through knowing the time and number of launches of Chinese and foreign spaceships, let students feel the growing strength of their motherland. The teacher can also add the information about the first spacecraft in the world to land on the moon.

Secondly, teachers are supposed to expand students' reading material. Reading is an indispensable part of English learning. The time of an English class is limited, and the

(3) Teachers should create kinds of intercultural communication activities to increase students' interest and provide intercultural communication opportunities.

A good learning process is an activity that utilizes learning strategies. The most important thing for elementary school students is to learn how to learn and to think about the way to solve problems. Elementary school students are always playful by nature and they do not like the input of a lot of text-based knowledge. Considering this characteristic of primary school students, teachers should create colorful types of activities for them when cultivating their intercultural communication skills. At the same time, elementary school English teachers should consider that the activity levels should be progressive.

In the process of English teaching, there are six major types of activities, namely, conversation, question and answer, discussion, group work, role play and dramatize. Next, the author will give examples of how to create question and answer, group work and role play activities.

For question and answer, elementary school students are aggressive. Teachers can utilize the characteristics of elementary school students' age stage to carry out teaching activities. Teachers can conduct a quick-quiz game around a cultural theme. The quick-quiz activity requires students to give the correct answer in a short period of time. The first person to raise their hand and give the correct answer gets a point. At the end of the game, the person with the highest score wins. For example, in Unit 5 "He is playing the suona, but the phone rings", the teacher can play the sounds of traditional musical instruments from different countries for the students to identify the types of instruments by listening to the sounds. At the same time, the teacher can present pictures of musical instruments and ask the students to quickly name the instruments in the pictures. In these games, students learn the names of musical instruments from all over the world and hear the sounds they play. In this game activity, students' auditory and visual senses are involved in the learning of cultural knowledge, which mobilizes multiple senses, students' attention is more focused, and the teacher's teaching effect will be more efficient than that of a classroom in which cultural knowledge is merely imparted.

For group work, in this activity, the teacher can cultivate the spirit of cooperation, and the students know how to do group activities, which can lay a foundation for intercultural communication. Teachers can give each group of students a cultural theme and let each group represent a different country. For example, in the unit, "I want to eat hot dog", this unit is

about food, and the teacher can carry out a class activity on the theme of world food appreciation. The students should first define the task, and then the group should be divided into specific tasks for each person. For example, a group on the theme of Chinese food could be assigned tasks by province. Each student in the group is responsible for one cuisine. This will allow all students to participate in the group activity. This draws the students closer to the cultural experience and they all learn something from this activity.

For role play activities, teachers should create situations that close to students' lives for intercultural communication. When the context is close to the students' lives, the students have a deeper knowledge of the culture, and they know what they want to express and how to express themselves when they communicate cross-culturally. At the same time, the communicative context close to students' life can let students successfully apply to their real life, and truly let students apply it into their real life. For example, in the sixth unit "Why are you wearing a hat", teachers can create a situation of international shopping stores. Students act as people from different countries and come to the store to buy clothes. People from different countries wear different clothes, and in order to successfully complete the teacher's role play activities, students have to learn about the custom culture of different countries by themselves before the activity, which becomes the driving force for students to learn cross-cultural communicative knowledge independently. At the same time, the teacher can ask students to choose the most beautiful clothes, so that they can learn to respect the dress culture of different countries.

Teachers should make use of the activities so that students can develop intercultural communication awareness and acquire intercultural communication knowledge and ability.

6. Conclusion

Elementary school English teaching materials need to be injected with more cultural factors, and elementary school English teachers should improve their cross-cultural communicative competence, explore the cultural connotation of the texts in the unit integrity teaching, supplement the Chinese and foreign cultural materials, and create cross-cultural communication situations that are close to the winning ones. Only in these ways, can students develop the cross-cultural competence in the unit integrity teaching in elementary school.

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