

# *Intercultural Communication Competence Training: A New Orientation for Higher Vocational English Teaching*

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**Abstract:** This paper explores a new approach to cultivating students' intercultural communication competence in higher vocational English teaching. By analyzing the shortcomings of traditional teaching methods, this paper proposes a teaching orientation centered on cross-cultural communication, emphasizing the close integration of language learning and cultural understanding. Under the new teaching model, students will better understand and respond to the challenges of intercultural communication, and improve their comprehensive language skills and cultural adaptability.

## **1. Introduction**

As globalization continues to advance, intercultural competence is increasingly becoming a key factor for success. However, the traditional higher vocational English teaching model has certain shortcomings in cultivating students' ability. The purpose of this paper is to explore a new approach to higher vocational English teaching, which can better cultivate students' intercultural communication skills and make them more competitive in their future careers.

## **2. Problems and limitations in traditional teaching**

### **2.1. The problem of language detachment from culture**

In traditional higher vocational English teaching, there is an obvious disconnect between language and culture. Teaching tends to focus on grammar and vocabulary, ignoring the cultural connotations behind the language. Language is the expression of culture, which contains specific social backgrounds, historical traditions, and people's values. However, traditional teaching models fail to dig deep into this inner connection, leaving students feeling overwhelmed by actual intercultural communication.

The most striking of the problem of language detachment from culture is the lack of in-depth analysis of cultural contexts. Students may be fluent in the rules of language, but they may not be able to understand the implicit norms and meanings of different cultures. This leads to embarrassment and misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication, as the superficial meaning of language may be contrary to the cultural connotation<sup>[1]</sup>.

In order to solve this problem, teaching should pay more attention to the integration of cultural

elements. By introducing language-related cultural content into the curriculum, such as idiomatic expressions, cultural and traditional backgrounds, etc., students can learn more comprehensively about the cultural connotations behind language. For example, by discussing the etiquette and customs of different countries, students will not only learn practical communication skills, but also gain insight into the differences between cultures.

In addition, teachers can stimulate students' interest in learning by choosing contexts, stories, and examples that are closely related to the culture. Through real and vivid cases, students can more easily connect language and culture, and form a more three-dimensional learning cognition. For example, through films, literary works, or cross-cultural interactive experiences, students can gain a deeper sense of the interactive relationship between language and culture.

Overall, addressing the problem of language detachment from culture requires finding a balance in teaching so that language learning and cultural understanding complement each other. By skillfully integrating linguistic and cultural elements, teachers are better able to develop students' intercultural communication skills, so that they can more freely and deeply integrate into the environment of multicultural communication.

## **2.2. Lack of acculturation**

In traditional higher vocational English teaching, students often face a lack of cultural adaptability. This deficiency is particularly prominent in cross-cultural communication. Cultural adaptability is not only an extension of language learning, but also related to students' communication and employment in different cultural environments.

First of all, the traditional teaching model focuses on the inculcation of grammar and vocabulary, but rarely involves the cultural aspect of education. Students may be proficient in grammar rules and vocabulary, but they lack sensitivity to different cultural backgrounds. This makes it difficult for students to understand and properly respond to the rules of conduct and social etiquette in a cross-cultural environment in the actual communication process.

Second, traditional teaching often lacks the opportunity to provide practical cross-cultural experiences. Students are limited to book knowledge in the classroom, and it is difficult for them to truly perceive and experience the differences of other cultures. This creates a lack of adaptation for students in actual cross-cultural situations, as they lack the opportunity and experience to deal with cultural differences in real-world situations.

Addressing the lack of acculturation requires the introduction of more culturally relevant content in teaching. Teachers can develop students' knowledge and understanding of different cultures through teaching materials, case studies, and discussions. At the same time, it provides more practical cross-cultural experience activities, such as cultural exchanges, field trips, etc., so that students can experience and cope with the challenges of different cultural environments.

Through such teaching adjustments, students will better understand and adapt to the multicultural social environment and improve their cultural adaptability. This is essential for their future career development and international exchanges, making them more competitive and broad-minded.

## **2.3. Limitations of lack of practical cross-cultural experience**

In traditional higher vocational English teaching, textbooks and classrooms are often used as the main teaching methods, resulting in a lack of opportunities for students to have practical cross-cultural experience, which has become a limitation of the teaching model. It is difficult for students to truly understand and feel the characteristics of different cultures through only learning through books, so they appear cramped and uncomfortable in actual cross-cultural communication.

First of all, although the cases and teaching materials in the books can introduce the basic concepts

of culture, it is difficult to restore the real cultural environment. For example, when learning about a country's culture, students may learn about some traditional festivals and customs, but they may not be able to experience the local festival atmosphere and national sentiment firsthand. This makes their understanding of culture theoretical, and it is difficult to apply knowledge to practice<sup>[2]</sup>.

Secondly, the lack of actual cross-cultural experience also affects students' cultural adaptability. It is only in an authentic cultural environment that students are able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the local lifestyles, values, and social norms. Through field trips, cultural exchange activities, and international internships, students are able to integrate more actively into the culture and develop stronger cultural adaptability.

Therefore, to improve the teaching of higher vocational English, it is necessary to focus on expanding the channels of students' cross-cultural experience. Teachers can actively organize students to participate in various practical activities, such as organizing cultural exchange activities, arranging field trips, etc., so that students can learn and communicate in a real cultural environment. Through such improvements, students will have a more comprehensive understanding and adaptation to different cultures, laying a solid foundation for intercultural communication.

### **3. Innovative teaching mode with cross-cultural communication as the core**

#### **3.1. Integrate language learning and cultural understanding**

In traditional higher vocational English teaching, language learning and cultural understanding are often deliberately separated into two independent areas, resulting in a lack of comprehensive understanding of the closely intertwined relationship between language and culture. The problem with this separation is that students only grasp the rules of grammar and vocabulary, but do not really understand the fundamental purpose of language, which is to express language and convey emotions in culture. Therefore, in order to construct a teaching model centered on intercultural communication, teachers urgently need to integrate language learning and cultural understanding as an integral part of teaching.

In terms of language learning, teachers can adopt targeted teaching methods that integrate grammar and vocabulary teaching into real-life language use situations. Through practical examples and scenario simulations, students will be able to gain a deeper understanding of the practical use of language, not only by memorization and recitation, but also by truly experiencing the flexible use of language. In addition, students are guided to learn culturally relevant language materials, such as authentic colloquial expressions, slang and idiomatic expressions, to help them better understand the cultural connotations behind the language.

In terms of cultural understanding, teaching can expand students' horizons by introducing a variety of authentic cultural materials. Multimedia means such as literature, films, and music can vividly show the life scenes and values of different cultures. Through an in-depth understanding of the cultural heritage, students will be able to grasp the cultural elements of the language more comprehensively, thereby increasing their cultural sensitivity. Teachers should focus on interacting with students, inspiring them to interpret language from a cultural perspective, so that students can better reflect the characteristics of culture in their language expression.

Teaching methods that integrate language learning and cultural understanding can not only break down the barriers in traditional teaching, but also enable students to integrate cultural elements more flexibly and freely in the use of language. Through this integration, students will better understand and use language and be more confident in the challenges of intercultural communication. Such a teaching orientation helps to develop students' comprehensive language skills, making them more competitive in real life and careers<sup>[3]</sup>.

### 3.2. Creative use of teaching materials and resources

In traditional higher vocational English teaching, the teaching content is usually limited by textbooks and workbooks, which limits students' learning horizons and makes it difficult to satisfy their thirst for multiculturalism. In order to develop students' more comprehensive intercultural communication skills, teachers need to creatively use a variety of teaching materials and resources in their teaching.

In the selection of teaching materials, teachers can introduce more representative cultural materials according to the characteristics of the subject, such as newspaper articles, social surveys, real dialogue recordings, etc. These materials not only expose students to more authentic and real-life contexts, but also allow them to better understand cultural differences and the contextual factors behind them. For example, by introducing real-life stories from local people, students are able to gain a deeper understanding of the social habits, values, and daily lives of different cultures.

In addition to traditional teaching materials, teachers can also use the Internet and multimedia technology to creatively design course content. Through the use of online platforms, virtual reality and other resources, students are able to learn more intuitively about the lifestyle, social structure and local customs of different cultures. For example, through virtual reality walkthroughs, students can experience foreign cultures in an immersive way, so as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction between language and culture. Such innovative teaching methods not only stimulate students' interest in learning, but also foster their understanding and respect for cultural diversity.

The creative use of materials and resources helps to break down the monolithic framework of traditional teaching and provide students with a wider range of learning channels. This multi-faceted learning approach can cultivate students' diverse perspectives and abilities in intercultural communication, so that they can better adapt to the challenges of intercultural communication in the future. In this information-rich era, teachers' innovative thinking and teaching methods will greatly enrich students' learning experience and push them to understand and apply the relationship between language and culture more deeply.

### 3.3. Provide hands-on opportunities and cross-cultural experiences

The learning of theoretical knowledge is the basis for cultivating students' intercultural communication skills, however, real competence is not only reflected in book knowledge, but also needs to be exercised in practical situations. Therefore, in order to ensure that students are able to cope with intercultural challenges in a real-world environment, teaching needs to actively provide practical opportunities and intercultural experiences, combining theoretical knowledge with practical exercises, so that students can develop their intercultural communication skills in a broader context.

Practical opportunities are a bridge for students to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. Through role-playing, teamwork and other methods that simulate cross-cultural situations, students can experience the communication and collision between different cultures in a simulated environment. For example, students are organized to simulate international business negotiations, so that they can feel the similarities and differences in business etiquette, communication styles, and decision-making styles in different cultural backgrounds in real scenarios. Such hands-on activities not only help students develop their ability to cope with cross-cultural challenges, but also enhance their teamwork and problem-solving skills.

Intercultural experiences are an effective way for students to gain an in-depth understanding and immerse themselves in different cultures. Through field trips, cultural exchange activities and international internships, students are able to experience first-hand what different cultural environments are like. For example, students are arranged to participate in cultural exchange activities, interact with students from other countries, and share their cultural traditions, habits, and values. This

hands-on experience enables students to gain a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and develop their open-mindedness and intercultural adaptability.

By providing hands-on opportunities and cross-cultural experiences, teaching not only liberates students from textbook knowledge, but also motivates them to continuously adapt and develop intercultural communication skills in practice. This pedagogical orientation aims to develop students' ability to respond more comprehensively and flexibly to intercultural challenges, making them more competitive in future professional and social situations. In the age of globalization, having authentic intercultural experiences will be a key factor in student success, and this is exactly what the intercultural communication-centered teaching model pursues<sup>[4]</sup>.

## **4. Enhance cross-cultural sensitivity and adaptability**

### **4.1. Development of cross-cultural communication skills**

At the heart of developing students' intercultural sensibilities is developing their intercultural communication skills. Effective intercultural communication requires students not only to master verbal skills, but also to have the ability to communicate nonverbally and resolve cross-cultural conflicts. The following is an in-depth look at how to develop students' skills to communicate effectively in different cultural contexts through teaching and learning.

In intercultural communication, language is the most direct communication tool. Teaching should focus on the use of language in real situations, and allow students to flexibly use the language they have learned in real scenarios through simulated dialogues and situational performances. Teachers can guide students to pay attention to the common language expressions, idiomatic expressions and etiquette expressions used in different cultures, so that they can express themselves more authentically and communicate more confidently across cultures.

In addition to language, non-verbal communication is also a part of intercultural communication that cannot be ignored. Through teaching, students should learn to observe and understand each other's body language, facial expressions, and gestures, as these may have different meanings in different cultures. Through role-plays and practical case studies, students can increase their sensitivity to nonverbal signals to a more comprehensive understanding of their cross-cultural interactions with others.

Cross-cultural communication inevitably leads to conflicts and misunderstandings, so students need to have problem-solving skills. Through case studies, teamwork, and role-plays, students can simulate cross-cultural conflict scenarios and learn to use effective resolution strategies. Teachers should encourage students to learn to communicate proactively, seek consensus, and cultivate their calm and understanding attitude in the face of cultural differences.

Through these teaching methods, students will gradually develop more comprehensive and effective abilities in the development of cross-cultural communication skills. This not only helps them better cope with the challenges of the cross-cultural environment, but also lays a solid foundation for future career development. In the era of globalization, having excellent cross-cultural communication skills will enable students to stand out in the workplace competition and bring broader opportunities for personal development.

### **4.2. Respect for and understanding of cultural diversity**

The key to developing students' intercultural sensitivity is to develop their respect and understanding of cultural diversity. The following section will explore how pedagogical approaches can be used to guide students to recognize, respect and understand the diversity between different cultures.

First, teaching should inspire students to recognize cultural diversity. By introducing a variety of literary works, film and television materials, and real-life cases, students can gain an in-depth understanding of the history, traditions, values, and customs of different cultures. Through discussions and group activities, teachers can guide students to actively explore, so that they can recognize cultural diversity from multiple perspectives, and understand that each culture is unique and deserves to be respected and protected.

Emphasizing respect for cultural differences is an important part of developing students' cross-cultural sensitivity. Through case studies and group discussions, students can share characteristics of their own cultures and learn about the cultural traditions and backgrounds of other classmates. Teachers should encourage students to be open-minded about differences, recognizing that differences do not mean superiority or inferiority, but are part of cultural diversity. Through sharing and comparison, students will better understand the commonalities between cultures and build an appreciation for different cultures.

When faced with cultural conflicts, students need to have the ability to interpret and mediate. Teaching can train students' cultural conflict resolution skills through simulated cases, role-plays, and real-world situations. Teachers should guide students to recognize that cultural conflicts may stem from misunderstandings and different cultural expectations, and cultivate their awareness of active communication and problem-solving<sup>[5]</sup>. By simulating real-world situations, students can experience the process of seeking common interests based on respect for differences, so that they can better cope with possible cultural conflicts in the future.

Finally, teaching should encourage students to experience different cultures first-hand and further deepen their understanding of cultural diversity. This can be achieved through cultural exchange activities, field trips, and international internships. Through practice, students will be able to deeply feel the unique charm of culture, so that they can better understand and respect the diversity between different cultures.

Through the above teaching methods, students will have a more comprehensive and profound understanding of the importance of cultural diversity. This kind of training not only makes students more comfortable in a cross-cultural environment, but also lays a solid cross-cultural foundation for their future careers and lives.

### **4.3. Training in cross-cultural teamwork**

In today's globalized context, the key component of developing students' cross-cultural sensitivity is the training of cross-cultural teamwork. In response to this problem, how to help students adapt and gracefully meet the challenges of cross-cultural teamwork through teaching methods.

First, teaching should help students understand the characteristics of cross-cultural teams. Guide students to recognize that team members may come from different countries, have different cultural backgrounds, and work habits. Through case studies and group discussions, students can share and learn from the experience of working in cross-cultural teams, identify cultural differences that may arise in teamwork, and lay the foundation for better teamwork.

In the training, the division of roles and communication mechanisms in cross-cultural teams should be emphasized. Teachers can simulate real-world work scenarios to allow students to experience the challenges of communication in different cultures. Emphasizing the importance of clear roles and timely communication, students are trained to adapt to the way of working in teams of different cultures, and form an efficient teamwork mechanism.

Students need to learn to decipher the work habits behind the culture, which is an important part of cross-cultural teamwork. Through case studies and real-world simulations, teachers can guide students to understand the concept of time, decision-making styles, and attitudes towards authority in

different cultures. Through the above learning, students can better understand the influence of cultural background on the way they work, and lay the foundation for smoother teamwork.

Decision-making and collaboration skills in cross-cultural teamwork are key competencies that students need to develop. Teaching allows students to experience the process of making decisions and solving problems in cross-cultural teams by simulating real-world work scenarios such as project management and team collaboration. Emphasizing the importance of cooperation, sharing information and working together, students develop an attitude of taking responsibility and actively working together in a team.

Finally, teaching should emphasize professionalism in the context of globalization. By introducing examples of successful cross-cultural teamwork, students can learn successful teamwork experiences and skills. Teachers can also invite professionals working in international businesses to share their experiences, giving students a better understanding of what cross-cultural teamwork actually looks like in a globalized context.

Through continuous learning, students will better adapt to the requirements of cross-cultural teamwork, improve the efficiency of teamwork, and prepare for future career development. Such learning is designed to enable students to be more competitive in multinational corporations and international organizations, and to successfully face the challenges of multicultural teams<sup>[6]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

The teaching orientation of higher vocational English centered on intercultural communication proposed in this paper is expected to more effectively cultivate students' intercultural communication ability by emphasizing the integration of language learning and cultural understanding. Teachers should actively adopt new teaching models to provide students with more opportunities for practical cross-cultural experience, so as to enable them to better adapt to the challenges of the era of globalization.

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