

# Exploring the Cultivation of Students' Intercultural Communication Awareness in English Language Teaching

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**Abstract:** As global integration continues to merge, international cooperation and communication are also increasing. Students are learning English not only as a tool but also because it plays an important role in our lives and studies. However, due to the various cultures and histories of different countries, languages and cultures also differ greatly, so it is important to pay attention to the training of learners' intercultural skills in English language teaching to promote their knowledge of the language and their cultural mastery.

**Keywords:** English language teaching; Students; Intercultural communication; Awareness building

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## 1. Introduction

With the increasing pace of internationalization of the economy and society between countries, it is crucial to measure whether a person has excellent English communication skills, apart from that, and must also have excellent intercultural communication skills. Given this, strategies and approaches to cultivate intercultural communication awareness and innovation in English language teaching are the main directions of our English language teachers' efforts and goals.

## 2. Main article

### 2.1 The meaning of intercultural communication awareness

Cultural communication competence refers to the ability of students to understand the different cultural backgrounds of interpersonal communication and to use language appropriately based on mutual respect and understanding<sup>[1]</sup>. At the same time, intercultural communication competence reflects the communicator's sensitivity to the differences between foreign and local languages and the ability to change one's perception of language through the target language and culture after using a foreign language for communication.

### 2.2 The role and significance of developing students' intercultural communication awareness

English teachers can help students communicate with international friends and gain a better understanding of foreign cultures if they train students in intercultural communication skills in class. At present, many schools do not have a unified system of understanding intercultural communication, especially for the training of students in language and cultural communication is not enough, the theoretical basis is lacking, and it is not supported by relevant concepts and teaching materials. As a result, English teachers are not able to develop their intercultural communication skills and are unable to improve their language and cultural literacy. Moreover, students' ability to understand and a judge is weak, and they are in a constant learning process, especially in the face of the great differences between the English language and culture and the Chinese, which can make it difficult to accept new knowledge for a while. The differences should be explained.

For example, the ordering of places and times in English is generally arranged from small to large. For instance, “中国长城” in Chinese is expressed in English as “The Great Wall in Beijing, China”. Therefore, when teaching this part of the lesson, teachers should help their students to understand this culture of English and to get used to it.

## **2.3 Strategies for Developing Intercultural Communication Awareness in English Language Teaching**

### **2.3.1 Building intercultural communication awareness**

In English class activities, teachers must make it one of their main tasks to guide students to develop good intercultural communication skills and to integrate exposure to and understanding of the cultural differences between East and West, so that students can analyze the roots of language differences based on the history of Western cultures<sup>[2]</sup>. In addition, English class activities need to be interesting and practical, relevant to real life, and easy for students to develop a strong desire to learn, and teachers should integrate language into class activities by understanding students' knowledge of the various aspects of cross-cultural education, including the origins, backgrounds of Western culture. This allows students to develop a comprehensive comprehension of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, to be guided by an inclusive educational philosophy, to explore actively, and to establish reasonable educational goals that lead to cross-cultural language knowledge.

### **2.3.2 Establishing an Intercultural Communication Classroom Environment**

Innovative educational methods based on conventional classroom teaching provide a reasonable environment for the training of students' cross-language and cultural communication skills, so that students can be guided by their teachers to bring them smoothly into the interlanguage and cultural communication classroom teaching environment, learning, and progressing together, and thereby reducing the drawbacks associated with traditional, exam-oriented education. Teachers need to enable learners to master the basic skills of English communication, while at the same time being actively immersed in the reality of social communication, drawing on the cultural content of English, mastering the development of the English language, and directly influencing their intercultural awareness and improving their expression and writing skills in the process of teaching. Teachers can therefore design communication scenarios to address the knowledge points in the content of the materials so that learners can enhance their interpersonal skills and experience the charm of culture in the scenarios.

For example, when learning English greetings, if teachers change their traditional teaching ideas and create a cross-cultural communicative atmosphere for students to learn English, they will be able to master these English sentences in a short period, and at the same time, students will also get a strong sense of participation and the joy of learning. More importantly, this cross-cultural communicative atmosphere is conducive to forming a good intercultural awareness of the language.

### **2.3.3 Refine what you learn and focus on the small differences**

The meanings of the same words and the places and ways in which they are used often vary greatly depending on the constraints and influences of different cultural contexts.<sup>[3]</sup> For example, words that are considered commonplace can sometimes have many meanings, and failure to correctly notice the differences in the various cultural contexts in which they are used can lead to misunderstandings in communication and interaction. Moreover, the differences in production conditions, customs, upbringing, and psychological characteristics of people in different countries can lead to differences in language use and communication activities. To avoid awkward situations in practical communication, English teachers should pay attention to the training of students' language communication skills and help them to communicate easily and proficiently as students.

For example, in China coffee refers to black coffee, but overseas coffee includes two kinds, black and white, where black coffee refers to pure coffee without cream or sugar, not black coffee. If learners do not understand the slight difference, it is easy to disagree and make jokes when communicating with foreigners.

### **2.3.4 Continuous and cumulative enhancement of language and cultural literacy of English teachers**

Although teachers of English are generally quite highly qualified in their subject matter, however, due to social development and the increase in scientific knowledge, many of them are missing the ability to continuously educate themselves and improve their professionalism amid their heavy educational and teaching work, resulting in their inability to meet the current evolving needs of teaching English. Weak intercultural communication skills also prevent them from influencing students positively with their role models. For this reason, English teachers need to improve their academic standards and enhance their English teaching and cross-regional cultural communication skills if they are to keep up with the pace of development in an increasingly developed Chinese society and international environment, to correctly grasp the basic meaning of Western culture and clearly distinguish the differences that exist between Chinese and Western cultures so that students can understand through their thinking with Western culture in the process of learning. The profound charm of Chinese culture will help students develop a more positive outlook on life and values.

### 2.3.5 Emphasis on the use of English in different contexts

Vocabulary is also a more important element of ELT activities and it occupies an important place in the development of student's communication skills. To enable them to train their overall communication skills effectively, they should also focus on the use of English words and phrases<sup>[4]</sup>. In addition to this, attention should be paid to the following aspects of making sentences in English: firstly, in terms of words. The type of words used varies according to the situation. For illustration, the word dragon, in Chinese translations, mainly refers to our national totem image and, in ancient legends, is also an animal that can bring fortune to people by raising clouds and sending rain, which we call a “rui-beast in ancient legends. In Western countries, however, the word expresses a powerful creature and more often represents an image of an evil dragon. Therefore, when encountering such words or vocabulary that are very different between Chinese and Western cultures, teachers need to focus on explaining them and be able to deepen students’ impressions to avoid problems in future cultural exchanges. Secondly, in terms of collocation. Some words in English have a powerful collocation function, so teachers need to focus on understanding this part of the vocabulary. Take the word “man” for example, teachers should bring in the words “postman, policeman” and so on to increase students’ learning through prefixes, suffixes, and compounding.

## 3. Conclusion

All in all, English courses require teachers to train students in basic listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and basic English daily communication skills, but it also requires teachers to give students a richer knowledge of traditional Chinese culture so that they can consolidate the foundation of Chinese traditional culture. When teaching theoretical knowledge and carrying out teaching activities such as daily speaking training, teachers are required to create English communication situations flexibly and give students guidance so that they can gradually build up their awareness of intercultural communication and at the same time enhance their understanding of the differences in the use of Chinese and English and social backgrounds.

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