

Research on the Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Competence in High School English Reading Instruction

Zhenglin Kuang

Sichuan Normal University, Sichuan, Chengdu, 610101

Abstract: Cultivating students' intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the requirement of modern development, and it is also one of the general goals of high school English curriculum standards. English discourse is an effective way to cultivate students' intercultural communication competence for it is loaded with intercultural knowledge, and of great intercultural value. Based on discourse and three-dimensional objectives, this study designs four teaching steps to implement the cultivation of ICC, i.e., attitude cultivation, knowledge construction, application and practice, reflection and adjustment, providing a preliminary implementation plan for cultivating students' intercultural communication competence in high school English reading teaching.

Keywords: Intercultural communication competence; High school English; Reading instruction

1. Introduction

In today's world where globalization, informatization, and diversification are deepening, intercultural communication competence is considered to be one of the key competencies necessary for talents in the 21st century. In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the English Curriculum Standards for High school, which clearly states that under the requirement of compulsory education, senior high school English courses should help students to further learn and apply basic knowledge and skills of English, as well as develop intercultural communication competence. Therefore, senior high school plays a crucial role in cultivating students' ICC. The lack of intercultural awareness and competence will hamper the improvement and growth of English learners' reading ability. Thus, this paper aims to improve learners' intercultural competence through English discourse teaching, in order to explore a new method and means to the cultivation of students' ICC and provide practical reference for intercultural teaching in high school.

2. The cultivation of ICC in English reading course

2.1 The connotation and dimension of ICC

The study on Intercultural communication competence began in the 1950s. Scholars conducted extensive research on ICC from different perspectives and domains. Via using Delphi method, Deardorff finds that Byram's definition of ICC is widely accepted among experts. According to him, ICC entails the following aspects: knowing about the knowledge of other cultures and their own cultures, having intercultural communication skills, language communication abilities, and cognitive and interactive skills, valuing and respecting beliefs and behaviors of different cultures^[1].

As for the dimension of ICC, different scholars hold different point of views. Among them, the most influential one about intercultural communication competence is the EU model represented by Byram, which divides intercultural communication competence into four dimensions, namely knowledge, skills, attitude and awareness^[2].

Although there are discrepancies between Eastern and Western perspectives on the dimension of intercultural competence, there is agreement on the competence dimensions such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness^[3].

2.2 English teaching and ICC

In China, a large amount of the research on intercultural communication competence is aimed at the cultivation of intercultural communication competence in English language education, which mainly focuses on two aspects: first, constructing ICC model from a theoretical perspective. Second, a practical discussion of the development of intercultural communicative ability in English language

instruction. Chinese scholars conduct a research and discussion on ICC cultivation from teaching syllabus and content, curriculum arrangement and teaching principles, teaching materials, teaching methods, assessment methods and principles and other dimensions. Chen and Starosta designs a practical model, in which training principles, content and strategies are integrated^[4].

2.3 English reading teaching and the cultivation of ICC

The discussion that text reading promotes the development of learners' intercultural communication competence continues to attract experts and researchers' attention. believes that discourse mostly reflects the basic thinking mode of a specific cultural group and its values. The cultural content in traditional textbooks is limited to the knowledge of British and American cultures. For this reason, Byram (1997) adopts the "discovery" dimension and the "comparison" dimension, highlighting the need of teachers assisting learners in making comparisons between the cultural phenomena in the textbooks and that in their home country^[2].

3. The teaching design of high school English reading aiming at the cultivation of ICC

3.1 The teaching objectives of English reading in high school aiming at the cultivation of ICC

3.1.1 Knowledge objectives

Knowledge is an important part of ICC. The objectives of the knowledge dimension include language/body language knowledge, national/other country cultural knowledge, communication strategy knowledge, and various necessary knowledge^[5]. Furthermore, learners should master as much popular science knowledge as possible, pay attention to current events and improve their ability to express this knowledge in target language.

3.1.2 Skill objectives

Skill objectives refer to the language knowledge and strategy application ability, basic cognitive ability, and critical thinking ability^[6]. Language knowledge and ability to use strategies include the ability to use various types of knowledge and communication strategies. Basic cognitive abilities include the ability to understand different cultural phenomena and values, to compare and discover similarities and differences, and to summarize and synthesize information and viewpoints. Critical thinking ability include the ability to objectively analyze cultural phenomena or cases, the ability to reflect on one's own behavior actively, and the ability to creatively use of target language.

3.1.3 Attitude objectives

The attitude objectives cover global awareness, language and cultural awareness, and communicative motivation^[7]. Global awareness means that communicators realize that in the context of globalization and diversification, all human beings are an interconnected and interdependent whole. Language and culture awareness refers to the awareness of the inseparable relationship between language and culture. Communication motivation refers to the positive psychological factors held by the communication object and the culture of other countries in a specific communication.

3.2 Assessment of high school English reading teaching aimed at the cultivation of ICC

When carrying out evaluation, formative evaluation and summative evaluation should be integrated. In high school, students have already accommodated to the school's learning paradigm, and English learning has advanced to the intermediate level. At this time, teacher assessment, student mutual assessment, and student self-assessment should be part of the formative assessment used in English class.

3.3 Teaching procedures of high school English reading teaching aimed at the cultivation of ICC

3.3.1 Attitude cultivation

The first step in teaching is to make students open their minds, treat their own culture and other cultures with an open, tolerant and fair minds, so as to form a global awareness and enthusiasm for communication, and make a good preparation for the subsequent learning of intercultural knowledge and skills in attitude and psychology. This step can be carried out in "Lead-in". In this step, teachers can use pictures, videos, audio, animation, stories, games, discussions and other imported materials and activities to trigger students' attention in learning and desire for knowledge, and activate the relevant knowledge maps in students' brains.

3.3.2 Knowledge construction

The stage of knowledge construction is also the stage of learning. In this stage, teachers help students to develop intercultural knowledge by guiding students to analyze language knowledge and skills in the reading discourse, such as vocabulary, syntax, text structure, writing style, etc. At this stage, knowledge and skills are closely linked, and students build a knowledge system with the help of skills such as comparison, discovery, discrimination, and interpretation.

3.3.3 Application and practice

Application and practice stage emphasizes using the knowledge and skills learned from the discourse in practice to complete

tasks such as debate, group discussion, role-playing, mock interviews, essay writing, mind mapping, and case analysis. In this process, teachers are the facilitators of learning activities, and students actively and autonomously explore and take more and more responsibility for learning activities and ability development^[8].

3.3.4 Reflection and adjustment

During and after communication, communicators critically reflect on communicative behavior and processes. Based on reflection, adjust inappropriate performance in the dimensions of attitude, knowledge and skills, and further improve cross-cultural communication skills. In intercultural teaching, reflection is usually carried out at two levels^[9]. One is that students use the intercultural theories they have learned to understand and guide their own intercultural practice to test the applicability of the theories. The other is that summarize and analyze students' their own intercultural practice to gather experience. In this way, students' intercultural communication competence can be developed step by step in a continuous training cycle.

4. Summary

In the era of competence, cultivating students' core competence is the focus and direction of basic education curriculum reform in our country. As an important component of core competence, intercultural communication competence is one of the key competencies that talents should possess in seeking personal growth and development in the 21st century. Based on English reading discourse and guided by the three-dimensional goals of intercultural communication competence, this paper designs four teaching steps: attitude cultivation, knowledge construction, application and practice, and reflection and adjustment to help students develop intercultural communication competence in English reading teaching.

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