

A Research on the Contradiction Between English Theory Teaching and Students' English Practice Level

-Taking Students' Intercultural Communication Skills as an Example

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Abstract: As economic and cultural exchanges between countries around the world become more and more frequent, mastering cross-cultural communication skills becomes more and more important. The cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence has received wide attention in Chinese education. Although there is more and more domestic research on the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence, the teaching practice of intercultural communicative competence is still insufficient due to the influence of practical factors. This paper analyzes the dilemmas encountered in the teaching of cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence. Through the analysis, it is concluded that the obstacles encountered in the practice of cultivating intercultural communicative competence are mainly affected by the teaching concept, teaching methods, the lack of an atmosphere for English learning, and the single teaching material. Based on this, the paper puts forward the suggestions of updating educational concepts, teachers integrating multiple teaching methods, and teachers interspersing different cultures through vocabulary teaching.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication competence, language culture, English Language Teaching

1. Introduction

As the level of China's opening to the outside world continues to improve, China's international image continues to improve, and the Chinese government attaches more importance to foreign cultural output [1]. The intercultural English teaching mode should also be constantly adjusted and updated with the pace of the times. The New Curriculum Standards for English Language Programs explicitly identifies the development of students' cultural awareness as one of the five main aims of English language learning and emphasizes that language and culture are closely linked [2,3]. English language teaching encourages the exploration of foreign cultures and deepens students' understanding of and reflection on their own culture, thereby broadening their cultural horizons, developing intercultural communicative thinking, and developing basic intercultural communication skills. However, from the perspective of English teaching, this paper argues that there is a disconnect between theory and

reality in China's intercultural communication teaching research. The theory and practice of intercultural communication research in China have been developed to a certain extent, but they should still be further improved. Especially at the level of practice, it should be continuously explored and improved. Influenced by the teaching concept, teaching mode, teaching method, and other aspects. This paper will analyze the reasons why the cultivation of students' intercultural communication competence in China is out of touch with practice. Most of the early research on students' intercultural communicative competence focused on the development of students' intercultural communicative competence in English teaching. (e.g.). These studies have shed light on how English teachers can develop students' intercultural communicative competence in English teaching. However, these studies do not describe the contradictory research on developing students' intercultural communicative competence in the background of the current Chinese education model. The present study analyzed the current situation of the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence in China, for the primary purpose of exploring the obstacles encountered by teachers in the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence.

2. Challenges in Teaching Intercultural Communication Skills in English

2.1. Outdated Teaching Philosophy

Under the influence of the Gao Kao system, most of the schools in China still promote the teaching philosophy of teaching to the test. To deal with the college entrance examination, schools and teachers focus on pursuing the rate of advancement, thus the teaching design lacks the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence, and only focuses on teaching students what the examination tests, are and letting students learn what they need to learn. Teachers often increase the amount of homework so that students can master knowledge to handle the frequent exams organized by the school. In addition to a large number of materials for review and knowledge competitions in various subjects, so that the students' burden of schoolwork is also increased.

After school, students only pursue doing practice problems to improve their grades by doing a lot of exercises, but they neglect to improve their cross-cultural communication skills. To help their children get good grades, parents let students attend a lot of after-school tutoring courses during holidays to consolidate the foundation to cope with exams. Although a large number of after-school tutoring organizations have closed down recently under the impetus of the Double Reduction Policy, the phenomenon of after-school tutoring still exists. From these aspects, it can be seen that under the influence of exam-oriented education, schools, teachers, parents, and students themselves do not pay much attention to the cultivation of English intercultural communicative competence.

2.2. Modes of Teaching and Evaluation

In the current English classes, the grammar-translation method is still the most dominant teaching method. Influenced by exam-oriented education, teachers need to transfer knowledge to students by teaching in Chinese [4]. This teaching method overemphasizes the teacher's main position in the classroom, and students lack the opportunity to communicate in English. In the English classroom, vocabulary and grammar are the main content of English teaching, and lectures focus on explaining and analyzing sentence components and phonetics, vocabulary changes, and grammar rules. The grammar-translation method believes that learning a foreign language means learning vocabulary and grammar, and the sentence is the basic unit of language teaching and language practice [5].

Influenced by test-based education, in terms of evaluation methods, schools assess students' knowledge through tests. Tests focus on grammar, reading, and vocabulary; listening is tested only in elementary and middle schools and to a lesser extent. There are no tests of oral expression or intercultural communication skills.

2.3. Lack of English Learning Atmosphere

One of the main problems in developing students' intercultural communication skills at present is the lack of an English language environment [6]. In the English classroom, the students' main position is missing, and the teacher does not pay special attention to the student's needs and feelings in the English class but only inputs knowledge. Students not only lose the opportunity to think but also lack the opportunity to communicate and interact with others in English. The English lessons become just vocabulary and grammar learning, without oral practice and understanding of different cultures [7]. Moreover, learning English in a Chinese-speaking environment is inherently limited compared to learning English in an English-speaking environment. Learners lack the chance to use and express themselves, and students rely solely on rote memorization to learn English. And because students know little about the cultural background of English-speaking countries and do not effectively cultivate and learn cross-cultural communicative competence, when faced with communicating with native English speakers, there will be a great obstacle to the extent that it will cause errors in the understanding of both sides.

Due to the uneven distribution of educational resources, most schools in China are not equipped with foreign teachers. Outside of school, most students do not have access to native English speakers. Moreover, there is no guarantee that most English teachers can express themselves in standard and fluent English, and under the influence of years of exam-oriented education, some teachers themselves have little understanding of the cultural background of British and American countries, which results in the lack of an environment for students to learn cross-cultural communicative competence.

2.4. Single Textbook

Both teacher curriculum design and test objectives are based on English textbook material. However, the current textbooks are slow to be updated and do not keep pace with the times. For example, in the English textbooks of junior high schools, the topic of a certain module is shopping, and the content is a basic introduction to online shopping, which was not very popular when it first entered people's lives. However, in the present life, online shopping has been completely popularized, and even developed and perfected much faster than what is introduced in the textbooks. Through reading English textbooks, this paper found that the textbooks would focus on introducing and explaining the British and American cultures, but it is not enough to develop students' intercultural communication skills. For example, a certain module modeled how to ask for directions and how to give directions in England. However, this textbook only introduces some famous places in the UK, as well as sentence patterns and vocabulary for asking for directions and giving directions. It only simulates the scenarios in the UK and does not extend the differences in expressions between cultures that students should be aware of when asking for directions or giving directions abroad.

As a result, teachers face a series of challenges in using the textbook to develop students' intercultural communication skills. First, they may be limited by the content of the textbook to cover the newest socio-cultural changes and trends promptly. Second, it is difficult for teachers to provide real-time cultural resources and examples to help students understand the differences between different cultures nowadays, resulting in a lack of in-depth cultural understanding. Further, the textbooks only cover cultural differences at the surface level and lack in-depth thinking, preventing students from truly understanding the reasons and values behind different cultures. Finally, the textbooks cannot provide enough interactive and practical opportunities for students to use the intercultural communication skills they have learned in real-life scenarios, resulting in them only passively accepting the information and lacking the opportunity to use it. If teachers want to improve students' intercultural communication skills, they need to spend a lot of time looking for relevant

materials in the course design and integrate them effectively with the classroom content, which requires teachers to be equipped with the appropriate ability and level. Moreover, in English teaching, English textbooks are the main teaching materials for students to learn, and most of them do not have any other books about English except the corresponding exercise books equipped by the school.

3. Suggestions

3.1. Renewal of Teaching Philosophy

To solve the problem of the disconnect between research on developing students' intercultural communication skills and practice, it is necessary to base on renewing the concept of education. Schools and teachers should update the concept of education, understand why it is necessary to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence and emphasize that cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence combines theory with practice. Cultivating students' intercultural communication skills aims to promote intercultural communication and interaction, and spread and promote Chinese culture as well as values. It helps students to compare and reflect on their own culture with that of other countries, so that they can better understand their own culture, strengthen their cultural identity, and understand the values of the target culture. Schools and teachers should not aim primarily at teaching to the test. The purpose of offering the subject of English is to make English a tool for students, not solely to achieve higher grades. Focusing on the comprehensive development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing as the basis in English teaching, students' cognitive ability should be improved, and a solid foundation should be laid for the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communication skills [8].

3.2. Teachers Integrate Multiple Modes of Instruction to Deliver Lessons

English teachers should integrate a variety of teaching modes in teaching English classes. For example, they should use the direct method of oral teaching, without translation from the mother tongue, so that each word is directly related to the thing or meaning it represents, or repeat the sentences they have learned through various means of imitation so that the students can form a habit and reach the point of automatization. Focus on language practice exercises to improve students' motivation and stimulate their interest in learning English. Increase the proportion of the use of communicative teaching methods to develop students' ability to use language appropriately in different situations. Take students as the main body of communication and enrich the form of classroom activities. Through the use of natural, authentic, and real language materials, focus on students' ability to express their ideas and communicate their thoughts by cultivating their communicative competence [9].

3.3. Teaching Culture

Different languages reflect the characteristics of their respective cultures. In English teaching, students need to master various vocabularies. To improve students' intercultural communication skills, teachers can start with vocabulary and incorporate cultural content in teaching [10]. Cultivating students' intercultural communication skills requires them to understand the differences in vocabulary between countries, which requires teachers to improve their cultural literacy and understand the differences between Chinese and Western vocabulary. Teaching requires students not only to master vocabulary but also to know how to use it in different contexts, because subtle use of words may lead to misunderstanding of meanings. When teachers explain the meaning of vocabulary, they can also introduce the relevant foreign cultural background to help students understand better.

For example, when learning the word dragon, it is translated to mean dragon, but the expression dragon in English and Long in Chinese do not refer to the same creature. The dragon in Western culture is a symbol of evil. But the Long is a historical Chinese totem image that symbolizes honor, authority, prosperity, and other beautiful symbols. Therefore, in teaching, teachers should pay attention to the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communication skills, and compare the vocabulary and cultural information appearing in the articles, to sort out the differences between Chinese and Western cultures for students in detail. Teachers should not only let students understand the Chinese meanings of English words, but also understand the usage and meaning of words, to ensure that students can avoid word errors in cross-cultural communication, and avoid the use of sensitive vocabulary, which can cause misunderstanding between both sides.

4. Conclusion

All in all, with the development of economic and cultural globalization, countries around the world are getting closer and closer, and cultural exchanges are more frequent. However, due to the different cultural backgrounds, values, and ways of thinking around the world, there are big differences in people's ways of expression and language application, which requires teachers to pay attention to the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communicative competence, and better adapt to the rapid changes of the times. To actively respond to China's Belt and Road initiative, students as a reserve force for future participation in international exchanges, to strengthen the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence is not only a requirement of language teaching, but also an inevitable choice to promote the development of China's human resources. However, at present, due to the constraints of the real conditions, the teaching work has the problem of emphasizing theory but not practice. In this regard, it is necessary for schools to integrate cultural resources, build a new platform for intercultural communication, and provide opportunities for students to participate in communicative activities with a new teaching mode. It is necessary for teachers to gradually penetrate the cultural aspects through valuable courses to cultivate students' cross-cultural thinking and cross-cultural communicative competence, and to promote the enhancement of students' cross-cultural communicative competence.

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