

Strategies for Developing Intercultural Communication Skills in High School English Teaching from the Perspective of the New Curriculum

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Abstract

The 2017 edition of English curriculum criteria for regular high school explicitly outlines the expectations regarding the cultivation of students' intercultural communication abilities. It is evident that in the high school stage in China, there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of developing students' intercultural communication skills in English teaching. However, at present, there are still some problems related to the teaching of intercultural communication in senior secondary English teaching. In order to develop students' intercultural communication competence, teachers should prioritize the enhancement of their self-cultivation, pay attention to the cultivation of students' intercultural awareness and attitudes, focus on cultural similarities and differences, offer elective courses, make use of online resources and make assessment of intercultural communication competence an important element of formative assessment. Through these efforts, teachers can help students develop a broad cross-cultural perspective, enhance their intercultural communication skills and lay a solid foundation for their future development of international interaction and global perspective.

Keywords

Teaching English at the high school level; Intercultural communication skills; Development strategies.

1. Intercultural Communication Teaching and Intercultural Communication Skills

1.1. The Concept of Intercultural Communication Teaching

Intercultural communication as a discipline first emerged in the USA and became widely recognised in 1959 with Edward Hall's *The Silent Language*. This work is regarded as the founding work of intercultural communication and provided the basic framework and theoretical foundation for subsequent research and practice.[1]. Based on this, the concept of intercultural communication teaching has emerged, which involves teaching and learning between two or more cultures. Its core objective is to find those commonalities that can be understood and communicated through comparing commonalities and differences between cultures in order to better interpret different cultural phenomena. This mode of teaching integrates theory and practice and aims to develop students' ability to analyse different languages, ideas and behaviours in order to promote effective intercultural communication[2].

1.2. The Concept of Intercultural Communication Skills

The concept of intercultural communication skills has been defined by a variety of domestic and international scholars, and has been the subject of lively debate in recent years. Foreign scholars consider intercultural communicative skills to be the ability that an individual needs to have in order to realise his or her character, goals and expectations in a particular

environment that is appropriate to the way the individual operates in that environment[3]. They emphasize that intercultural communicative skills is the ability of an individual or organization to communicate effectively in different cultural contexts, and emphasize the identification of individuals and organizations with the different cultures involved in communication[4]. However, domestic scholar Wen Qiufang categorizes intercultural communicative skills into two dimensions: communicative competence and intercultural competence. Within communicative competence, linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence are encompassed. On the other hand, intercultural competence encompasses intercultural sensitivity and inclusiveness[5]. Intercultural communicative competence necessitates individuals or groups in varying cultural contexts to possess the aptitude to precisely comprehend, perceive, articulate, and assess their own culture as well as the cultures of different countries. This means that they are able to adapt to the communicative demands of different cultural contexts and understand and respect the cultural backgrounds and values of others. By being interculturally sensitive, individuals are able to perceive and adapt to differences between cultures and avoid cultural conflicts and misunderstandings. Inclusiveness, meanwhile, emphasizes the individual's acceptance of and respect for diversity, and demonstrates flexibility and an inclusive attitude in intercultural communication.

1.3. Components of Intercultural Communication Competence

According to the research findings of renowned scholars such as Yong Yun Kim, Brian Spitzberg, Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama in the field of intercultural communication, the main components of intercultural communication competence for high school students are as follows:

1.3.1. Knowledge

In learning English, students need to understand the cultural differences between China and the West and the corresponding customs and rules of communication. For example, in one of the marking criteria for written expressions in 2019 National College Entrance Examination, the expression of an agreement about time is examined. In Chinese thinking, students may directly ask the other party when it is convenient for them, whereas in English-speaking countries, when agreeing on a time, they usually indicate their availability first and then ask the other party for a convenient time. Therefore, students need to be aware of this cultural difference and acquire relevant knowledge.

1.3.2. Cultural Background

According to Scheitza, intercultural communication skills include the following: communicative competence and proficiency in language usage; adapting to different verbal and non-verbal modes of communication; flexibility in using different communication styles and conversation patterns; effective dialogue with people from different cultural backgrounds; avoiding and clarifying misunderstandings; asking questions rhetorically and obtaining information effectively etc[6]. These skills play an important role in intercultural communication.

For example, there are cultural differences between the West and China when it comes to non-verbal communication. In English-speaking countries, people look into each other's eyes when talking, which is seen as a sign of respect and attention to the topic of conversation, and they hold the belief that the absence of eye contact signifies insincerity. In China and other Asian countries, on the other hand, it is common for people to look at each other below the nose as a sign of respect. As a result, English-speaking people make eye contact more frequently and for longer periods of time during communication. This cultural difference shows that intercultural communication itself encompasses a rich cultural element and students should be fully aware of the influence of culture on communication.

1.3.3. Attitudes and Self-awareness

Students are expected to approach cultural differences with proper attitudes. Respect for the values and behaviour of other cultures is essential in intercultural communication, along with the need to demonstrate basic qualities such as politeness, friendliness, self-esteem and cognitive integration[7]. These qualities form the basis of intercultural communication.

In addition to the right attitude, students should also have a correct self-awareness. By learning about the culture of their home country, about their emotional attitudes, about their communication style and by making self-observations about themselves, students can increase their self-awareness and thus develop intercultural communication skills.

2. English Curriculum Criteria for Regular High School (2017 Edition) and Intercultural Communication Skills

The curriculum objectives in the English curriculum criteria for regular high school (2017 Edition) have shifted from "comprehensive language skills" to core competencies. The new curriculum standard clearly states that cultivating and developing the core competencies of senior secondary students is one of the important objectives of senior secondary English teaching[8]. As an important part of the core competencies, cultivating the intercultural communication skills of senior secondary school students not only helps to improve their core competencies, but also helps them to communicate better across cultures. The English curriculum criteria for regular high school clearly states that the core competencies in the high school English discipline mainly includes language ability, cultural awareness, quality of thinking and learning ability[9]. As a basic element of core competencies, language ability is also the foundation of intercultural communication skills. Improving language ability necessarily means improving cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability, as well as improving students' intercultural communication skills. Cultural awareness, as the value orientation of core competencies, plays a key role in intercultural communication. It enables students to identify with good culture and build up cultural confidence in the process of communication. The quality of thinking, on the other hand, is a mental characteristic of core competencies and is the pursuit of intercultural communication. It enables students to think through problems and complete the task of intercultural communication through a logical, critical and innovative way of thinking. As a condition for the development of core competencies, developing students' learning skills enables them to learn efficiently and autonomously, realising the goal of giving a person a fish is not as good as teaching a person to fish. The development of intercultural communication skills is also a learning process, and enhancing learning skills enables students to learn intercultural communication knowledge and skills more effectively. Therefore, the development of intercultural communication skills in high school students is a product of the development of core competencies in English in high school. Through the development of core competencies, students are better able to meet the challenges of intercultural communication and enhance their international competitiveness in the era of globalisation.

3. Problems in High School English Intercultural Communication Teaching

At present, there are many problems with teaching intercultural communication in English teaching in high schools in China, mainly in the following aspects.

3.1. Lack of Cultural Teaching Perspective in English Language Teaching

Over an extended period, the majority of secondary school English teachers have adhered to a monotonous approach of "exam-oriented education", which mandates students to memorize vocabulary, sentence structures, and texts. They also employ a "rote memorization approach"

prior to exams, treating students as mere instruments for memorizing words and grasping grammar, without fostering their burgeoning intellectual curiosity and creativity. The students are treated as simple tools for memorising words and learning grammar, without paying attention to their maturing intellectual curiosity and creativity. This repetitive and monotonous teaching approach is no longer able to meet the requirements of "quality education" for students' intercultural communication skills in today's context.

Although most teachers have recognized the importance of cultural teaching in English teaching, they still focus on teaching vocabulary, sentence patterns and grammar in the teaching process, without giving equal importance to cultural knowledge and linguistic knowledge, and place one-sided emphasis on students' language learning at the expense of cultivating their intercultural communication skills. Therefore, the formation of a systematic and comprehensive view of intercultural teaching has become the primary issue in English teaching at the stage of senior middle school.

3.2. Traditional Educational Philosophy Hinders the Development of Intercultural Communication Teaching

In the traditional teaching philosophy, it is common for both students and teachers to have the idea that if they master the content required for the exam, they will get high marks and thus achieve the purpose of learning. In the subject of English, the exams are mainly concerned with vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing, which can be mastered simply by practising them over and over again, as if there is no need to spend too much time and effort on learning cultural knowledge. However, this philosophy is outdated.

With the growing awareness of globalisation and the increasingly frequent exchanges between countries, people are eager to exchange ideas and transmit information to each other. These requirements make learning English not only about mastering the language, but also about understanding the complementary relationship between language and culture and using language to achieve the purpose of intercultural communication. It is only through an in-depth understanding of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures that intercultural communication skills can be truly enhanced. The original intention and purpose of English teaching in the basic education stage are precisely to cultivate students' intercultural communication skills.

3.3. Limitations in the English Curriculum, Teaching Materials, Teaching Environment, and Assessment Mode

Firstly, the English curriculum in the high school stage is relatively homogeneous and lacks rich cultural content. Typically, teachers use a uniform textbook for teaching in the classroom and assign the same teaching resources for homework. In addition, English examinations are often given in a uniform city-wide or district-wide format. These uniform patterns limit students' creativity and imagination and give them a single and boring impression of the cultural component of English, which hinders their learning of cross-cultural knowledge and the development of their abilities.

Secondly, the lack of an environment for intercultural communication is also one of the real problems that limit students' ability to improve their intercultural communication skills. On the one hand, English teaching in the high school stage generally lacks an authentic English environment, and students have limited chances for interactions with individuals from foreign countries; on the other hand, foreign language learning resources in schools are relatively inadequate, and facilities such as libraries, corpora and pronunciation lab are not well built, and students' access to English broadcasts, films and books is relatively limited.

Additionally, for many years, the evaluation methods and content of English teaching in our country have been relatively narrow, thus significantly impeding the development of students'

intercultural communication skills. Assessment methods such as regular tests, monthly examinations, mid-term examinations, final examinations, as well as college entrance examinations focus mainly on vocabulary and grammar tests, rendering the accurate evaluation of students' communicative competence level challenging. Multiple-choice questions are heavily weighted in English papers, mainly involving vocabulary and grammar, and summative assessments are overweighted and do not provide a realistic test of students' abilities such as intercultural emotions, attitudes and awareness.

4. Strategies to Cultivate Students' Intercultural Communication Abilities in High School English Teaching

4.1. Enhancing Teachers' Own English Proficiency to Accurately Impart Cross-cultural Knowledge to Students

High school English teachers are faced with a busy teaching schedule and often find it difficult to find time to read books related to intercultural knowledge, or simply do not have the opportunity to do so. This situation results in many teachers' knowledge of intercultural knowledge remaining at the same level after years of teaching experience, and some of this knowledge may not be accurate. However, understanding intercultural knowledge is crucial for English teachers. With the development of globalization, intercultural communication competence has become one of the core competencies for contemporary learners. Teachers need not only to impart language knowledge and skills, but also to help students understand the differences between cultures and develop their ability to communicate effectively in a cross-cultural environment.

Teachers therefore need to proactively seek ways to broaden their cross-cultural knowledge. Despite time constraints, there are handy resources and tools that they can use to enrich their knowledge. For example, teachers can read professional journals, academic papers and textbooks related to intercultural communication in order to keep abreast of the latest research findings and teaching methods. In addition, the Internet is a valuable resource for teachers to access information and share experiences with other teachers by visiting intercultural communication websites, participating in online discussions or following professional social media accounts. At the same time, teachers can actively participate in intercultural training and workshops. These training events are usually organised by professional organizations or schools and aim to improve teachers' intercultural teaching skills. By participating in discussions and sharing experiences, teachers can engage with other colleagues, learn from each other, and collectively explore how to better facilitate students' cross-cultural understanding and communication skills.

4.2. Developing Good Intercultural Awareness and Objective Intercultural Attitudes in Students

English teachers at senior secondary level should use the teaching materials as the main medium and dig deeper into the cultural connotations of the vocabulary, sentences, grammar, chapters and texts in the teaching materials in order to enrich students' understanding of the phenomenon of intercultural communication and thus develop their intercultural awareness. For example, when explaining the sentence pattern "How are you?", teachers should cultivate in students the Western social norm of refraining from inquiring about someone's age, as age is considered personal and one should not pry into the privacy of others. Likewise, when discussing the Western festival of "Christmas," teachers can expand the textbook content to introduce students to components such as "Santa Claus", "Christmas trees" and "reindeer", so that students can gain a deeper understanding of Western culture and enhance their intercultural competence. Throughout the intercultural teaching process, English teachers

should uphold the principle of "cultural diversity and cultural equality" and impress upon students that no culture is inherently superior or inferior to others. Distinct cultures manifest various values and ways of life. Every culture holds its own validity and merits admiration. It is undesirable to entirely forsake one's own culture and excessively idealize foreign cultures, or to scorn and dismiss foreign cultures while uncritically embracing one's own culture. As the custodians of culture and facilitators of student learning, English teachers should steer students towards approaching foreign cultures with objectivity. In the realm of intercultural communication, communicators must adhere to the principle of "cultural equity and equality of individuals", regarding foreign cultures neither with blind admiration nor disdain, but with an equitable perspective and attitude to appreciate and evaluate them. In intercultural communication, we should "take the essence and remove the dross", i.e. when learning and borrowing the essence of foreign culture, we should also selectively discard the unadapted or inappropriate parts of it.

Nurturing students' intercultural awareness and fostering intercultural attitudes is a multifaceted and time-consuming undertaking that cannot be achieved solely through classroom instruction in a single discipline. While English teaching serves as a vital avenue for cultivating intercultural communication skills, the scope of culture is very broad, involving a number of subjects such as history, geography and politics, all of which are relevant to the advancement of students' intercultural communication abilities. Therefore, English teaching must be integrated with the teaching of other subjects, drawing on each other and developing together. Firstly, just like we mentioned before, English teachers must broaden their own cultural knowledge and elevate their cultural literacy. Secondly, English teachers should engage in regular communication and exchange with teachers of other subjects. By collaborating with teachers of history, geography and politics, English teachers can gain a better understanding of culturally relevant content in other subjects, access more teaching resources and strategies, and achieve a coherent integration of knowledge. This interdisciplinary collaboration helps to improve students' overall quality and intercultural communication skills. English teachers should also develop students' awareness of and attitudes towards intercultural communication in a number of areas, including values, educational outlook and appreciation. They should guide students to be open and tolerant towards the differences between cultures and teach them to respect and appreciate the uniqueness of other cultures. Through classroom teaching and extra-curricular activities, English teachers can guide students to engage in intercultural communication practices and develop their communication skills, cooperation skills and cultural understanding.

4.3. Focusing on Similarities and Differences between Other Cultures and National Cultures in Teaching

English teaching involves two cultures, and one of the most effective teaching strategies is comparative teaching. By comparing English-speaking cultures with indigenous Chinese cultures, students can be helped to better understand and master the English language and culture. There are several important aspects of comparative teaching that require special attention: comparative teaching of spoken culture, comparative teaching of vocabulary culture, comparative teaching of sentence and discourse culture, and comparative teaching of Eastern and Western cultural values.

4.3.1. Comparative Teaching of Spoken Cultures

In the teaching of English at senior secondary level, the teaching of speaking covers a wide range of rules and conventions observed by individuals during the communication process. At this stage, the importance of teaching cultural differences is even more pronounced. Teaching oral language encompasses not only fundamental conversational scenarios but also entails the manifestation of traditional cultures from various countries in daily life, disparities in cultural

customs and expressions, as well as the diverse cultural connotations arising from distinct cultural values. Teachers must constantly remind students to strengthen their bicultural awareness, to develop a comparative learning concept of Chinese and English cultures in their oral expressions, and to become absorbers and integrators of different cultures. For example, when greeting someone, it is customary for Chinese people to ask them, "Have you eaten?" If you greet someone from an English-speaking country with the question "Have you had your dinner?", the person may mistakenly think that you want to invite them to dinner. This example demonstrates a cultural difference in spoken greetings in that English speakers usually prefer to talk about the weather, health, traffic or topical news when they meet and greet each other. This is one of the most basic examples of cultural differences in oral language teaching, and it is important for teachers to explain and illustrate such cultural differences to students during teaching. Through such examples, students are able to recognise the cultural differences in spoken communication and understand why English speakers choose different topics when greeting each other. Such comparative teaching helps students cultivate cross-cultural awareness, enabling them to recognize the differences in communication styles and customs across different cultural backgrounds. This, in turn, enhances their understanding and respect for other cultures.

4.3.2. Comparative Teaching of Vocabulary Cultures

At senior secondary level, the acquisition of vocabulary is a fundamental pillar of language learning and also a central component of intercultural communication. Through the comparative teaching of vocabulary culture, students can gain a better understanding of the cultural meanings embedded in vocabulary, as well as the emotional nuances and underlying cultural perspectives conveyed by words in different languages. For example, in Chinese, the word "dog" is often given a negative emotional connotation, such as "running dog", "dog servant" and "A dog's mouth cannot spit out ivory", which are often used to describe derogation and sarcasm. In English, however, the word 'dog' is often associated with positive connotations, such as 'a lucky dog' for '幸运儿' and 'Love me, love my dog' for '爱屋及乌'. This difference reflects the different attitudes and cultural perceptions of dogs in different cultures. Teachers should focus on teaching the differences in these words in different cultural contexts and help students to recognise the strong links between language and culture. Through rich teaching materials and examples, teachers can guide students to think about and discuss the cultural connotations and emotional overtones of vocabulary in different languages. By comparing and contrasting, students can enhance their understanding of the cultural meanings behind vocabulary and develop the sensitivity and awareness needed for intercultural communication.

4.3.3. Comparative Teaching of Writing Cultures

At the same time, the teaching of English writing at the senior secondary level faces the challenges posed by the differences between Western and Chinese ways of thinking, which also lead to significant cultural differences in the composition of sentences and discourse. For this reason, teachers should help students understand the cultural connotations embedded in sentences and discourse, and thus help them to improve their intercultural communication skills, not only in oral expressions but also in written expressions. For example, in English, both active and passive forms of expression are common and have nothing to do with emotionality; however, in Chinese, passive forms of expression often involve something negative and may evoke negative emotions. For example, it is commonly said in Chinese: "I have been stolen", "He was criticised by the teacher", "I was misunderstood by others". All these sentences use the passive form of expression, and all these situations involve some degree of negative emotion. In contrast, in English, expressions of similar situations are usually neutral and free of negative emotional overtones. Therefore, in English sentence and discourse teaching, teachers should

take "differences in Eastern and Western thinking" as a starting point to guide students in better understanding the differences in thinking patterns across different countries and languages. Teachers can provide rich examples to compare the differences in expressions between English and Chinese, thus helping students to recognise the differences in the messages conveyed by sentences and discourse in different cultural contexts. Teachers can also encourage students to think about how to make more appropriate and effective expressions in cross-cultural communication when writing, so as to avoid misunderstandings or inappropriate expressions that may arise from cultural differences. Teachers should also encourage students to take an active role in learning about the cultures and language habits of other countries. By understanding the perspectives and values of other cultures, students can be more sensitive to and respectful of cultural differences in their writing, and thus better able to construct oral and written expressions of intercultural communicative utterances and chapters.

4.3.4. Comparative Teaching of Cultures of Values

Values are at the heart of intercultural communication skills and relate to people's norms of action, ways of thinking, cognitive norms, philosophies of life, as well as standards and ethical codes for evaluating things[10]. Understanding the differences in values between cultures is essential in fostering students' intercultural consciousness and aptitude for communication. By conducting value difference education, teachers can help students better understand the differences between different cultures and the underlying reasons behind these differences, thereby reducing misunderstandings and confusion that may arise during cross-cultural communication. As an example, politeness and respect are values that are prevalent in a culture, but the specific ways in which they are expressed may vary depending on the cultural context. In English-speaking cultures, people usually use polite words such as "please", "thank you" and "excuse me" to show respect and concern. In Chinese culture, on the other hand, people may be more concerned about face and the hierarchy of respect and therefore use different expressions. For example, saying 'no' directly may be seen as rude, whereas it is more appropriate to use euphemisms to express one's opinion. Through value difference education, teachers can guide students to engage in comparative analysis and explore values within different cultural backgrounds, enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of the core values and priorities that different cultures emphasize. Teachers can also provide examples and situations in which students can experience and understand the impact of different values through role-play or discussion. Such an approach to teaching and learning helps students to develop an open and inclusive attitude and enhances their adaptability and sensitivity in intercultural communication.

4.4. Offering Intercultural-Related Elective Courses to Create a Holistic Intercultural Environment for Students

In order to broaden students' knowledge and meet their interests, elective courses have been widely offered in our colleges, but are still relatively uncommon in primary and secondary educational contexts. To align with the guiding principles of curriculum reform and cater to the instructional requirements of the English curriculum, senior secondary schools should introduce elective courses that focus on English culture. This will address the students' demand to enhance their intercultural communication abilities and overall competence development.

4.4.1. Original Material Reading Sessions

In English language teaching, we often find that: when students read English texts, although they do not encounter any new vocabulary and can understand the grammar, they cannot fully comprehend the text, resulting in mistakes in problem-solving; when they do English writing, they are always influenced by their mother tongue and write Chinese-style compositions, failing to obtain high marks. This is mainly because students lack the experience of learning in a foreign language environment, the opportunity to communicate with expatriates, and the

access to original materials in the foreign language. To solve these problems, teachers can select appropriate original materials in foreign languages and offer a course on reading in the original language of the foreign language. Through this course, teachers can use the original materials as a medium to introduce students to the cultural knowledge and social phenomena of the foreign country, thus getting twice the result with half the effort. For example, when students read the phrase "go Dutch", teachers can use it to introduce the war between Britain and the Netherlands over maritime trade at the end of the 17th century, so that they can have a deeper understanding of the phrases "Dutch bargain" (A deal made while drinking alcohol), "Dutch defence" (Retreat) and "Dutch concert" (alcohol-induced unrest). By reading the original materials, students are exposed to authentic English contexts and learn about the cultural connotations and historical stories behind them. This way of learning not only improves students' reading comprehension, but also develops their interest in and understanding of different cultures.

4.4.2. Appreciation Classes for Original Film and Television Productions

The introduction of original movies and American dramas into English language teaching is not new, but it is important to consider how they can be used more effectively to improve students' intercultural communication skills. For English learning at the high school level, teachers should select real-life movies and TV shows that are closely aligned with students' English proficiency and interests. In the classroom, specific themes should be chosen to guide students in appreciating the selected audiovisual works within the context of those themes. During the process of enjoying the film or TV work, teachers should organize discussions and presentations, or ask students to retell and summarize classic lines and episodes from the work, or even encourage students to express their understanding and feelings about the work in a foreign language. For example, the teacher has chosen an original American drama related to the theme of friendship. After watching the film, the teacher can guide students to discuss how friendship is expressed in the play, the interrelationship between the characters and the values behind it. Students can share their own understanding of friendship and explore the differences in the way friendship is perceived and expressed in different cultural contexts. In addition, teachers can invite students to retell and act out classic lines from the play so that they can understand and feel the characters' emotions and ways of thinking more deeply. Through such activities, students will not only improve their listening comprehension and oral expression of the English language, but also deepen their understanding of the differences between cultures.

4.4.3. The Original Scenario Model Reproduction Lesson

The English classroom is different from teaching other subjects in that it focuses more on communication and exchange. Therefore, the original Situational Model Reproduction class provides students with more opportunities to interact and communicate in English, and is an important part of developing intercultural communication skills. In this course, teachers can design various scenarios, such as interviews, negotiations, etc., and ask students to arrange their own roles and perform them. Through the process of role-playing, teachers can identify obstacles and problems that students encounter in intercultural communication. At the end of the performance, the teacher can point out problems and shortcomings in response to the students' performance in order to enhance their intercultural communication skills. For example, teachers may observe students' inaccurate use of polite language in their performances, confusion in the face of cultural differences, or lack of appropriate contextual understanding in their communication. In response to these problems, teachers can provide targeted guidance and feedback to help students improve their expressive skills and intercultural communication strategies. Through this type of lessons, students can practice intercultural communication skills and awareness in a safe classroom environment. They can role-play realistic communication situations and learn how to adapt to different cultural

backgrounds and understand and respect the customs and values of others. In addition, this teaching method stimulates students' creativity and expressive skills. Students are required to think about and use a variety of language skills in their performances to achieve communication, as well as to use their imagination to portray characters and to use language and body language to convey emotions and intentions.

4.4.4. Chinese Indigenous Culture General Education Course

At senior secondary level, in addition to teaching English language and culture, English teachers should also focus on developing students' identity and understanding of our local culture. The objective of English language learning extends beyond mere language proficiency, placing greater emphasis on attaining the objective of intercultural communication through the process of learning. However, the current situation is that many young people are very interested in Western traditional culture and can talk fluently about the origins and celebrations of traditional Western festivals such as Christmas, Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day, but they know very little about traditional Chinese festivals such as Qingming Festival and Dragon Boat Festival. Even the more familiar Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival are difficult to express and introduce fluently in English. In response to this situation, it is essential to offer cultural general courses related to traditional Chinese culture. These indigenous cultural literacy courses can serve as supplements to English and Chinese language courses, covering topics such as social customs, traditional festivals, Chinese classics, literary appreciation, historical figures, and more. Through these courses, students can not only develop intercultural communication skills, but also gain a deeper understanding and mastery of the local Chinese culture, and become the inheritors and transmitters of their mother tongue's culture. In these courses, teachers can use a variety of teaching methods to stimulate students' interest in and love for their local culture. For example, they can organise visits to traditional temple fair, hold celebrations of traditional Chinese festivals, or invite cultural experts and artists to give talks and demonstrations. Teachers can also guide students through group discussions, cultural presentations and lectures, giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and discoveries of Chinese indigenous culture. Through a general education course on indigenous Chinese culture, students will be able to better understand their cultural roots and enhance their understanding of traditional Chinese values and ways of thinking. This will help them express themselves more confidently and accurately in cross-cultural communication, as well as enhance their respect and appreciation for other cultures.

4.5. Making Full Use of Online Information Resources to Expose Students to More Information about Life in English-Speaking Countries

In today's era of rapid Internet development, teachers can use online information resources beyond textbooks to guide students to a deeper understanding of information about life in the target language country, thus effectively enhancing their intercultural communication skills. Life and culture are inextricably intertwined. Therefore, it is vital for students to learn information about the daily lives of people in the target language countries. Teachers can guide students to visit the official websites of supermarkets, shops and travel agencies in foreign countries in order to get information about local customs, food, clothing, housing and living habits in foreign countries. As an example, on the official website of Whole Foods Market, a supermarket chain in the USA, students can access a wealth of information on healthy food and organic ingredients. The website provides detailed information and nutritional values of various natural foods, organic agricultural products, etc. Students can gain an understanding of Americans' focus on and admiration for healthy eating, as well as their demands for food quality and sustainability. They can also learn about organic farms and suppliers in different regions and the health and environmental practices they adopt in their production and processing. This information will help students gain a more comprehensive understanding of American eating

habits and health consciousness. Through the use of online resources, students will have access to a wealth of comprehensive information about life in the target language country, which is essential to broaden their horizons and improve their understanding of the culture of the target language. At the same time, through the use of online resources, students can also develop the ability to search and filter information and enhance their independent learning skills and information literacy. In class, teachers can guide students to use online resources for research and information gathering, and guide them to analyze and interpret the information they have obtained. In addition, teachers can organize students to present and share information they have obtained on the Internet about life in the target language countries, and encourage them to express themselves orally or in writing in the target language to further deepen their understanding of cultural differences and commonalities.

4.6. Incorporating the Assessment of Intercultural Communication Skills as a Significant Component of Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is a method of evaluation carried out during the teaching and learning process to assess students' performance, achievement and the development of the emotions, attitudes and strategies they demonstrate in their daily learning. It is designed to guide the correctness and refinement of the teaching and learning process, as well as to evaluate the learning outcomes of students and the effectiveness of teachers' teaching[11]. Formative assessment is combined with summative assessment as a comprehensive way of evaluating students' learning outcomes and teachers' teaching effectiveness, as required by the English curriculum standards. Particularly in the development of intercultural communication skills, formative assessment holds significant importance. English teachers can include the assessment of intercultural communication skills as an important part of formative assessment according to the different English levels and cognitive abilities of their students.

When conducting formative assessment, teachers can assess students' intercultural communication skills in a variety of ways. For example, teachers can observe students' level of engagement and performance in cross-cultural communication activities, including their interactions with others, their ability to communicate using cultural background knowledge, and their flexibility in addressing cross-cultural communication barriers. Teachers can also assess students' language use and cultural awareness in intercultural communication through their written work, oral expressions and group work. In addition, teachers can design project tasks or practical activities that require students to use their knowledge of English and intercultural communication strategies to engage in authentic communication and interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds. Through these project tasks and practical activities, teachers can comprehensively assess students' intercultural communication skills in authentic communicative contexts, including accuracy in language use, sensitivity to cultural awareness and problem-solving skills.

The purpose of formative assessment is to help students develop and improve their intercultural communication skills, as well as to provide feedback to teachers in order to adjust and improve teaching methods and content. Through formative assessment, students can gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses in intercultural communication, which in turn boosts their motivation and provides clear guidance for their improvement and enhancement of skills. Based on the results of the formative assessment, teachers can make individual tutorials and teaching adjustments according to students' needs in order to promote the overall development of students' intercultural communication skills.

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