

# Strategies for Cultivating Intercultural Communicative Competence in English Teaching in Junior High School in China

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## Abstract:

As globalization continues to deepen, the importance of cross-cultural communication skills is increasingly highlighted in modern society. In China, with the growing frequency of international exchanges and cooperation, there is a rising demand for cross-cultural communication skills among people. Cross-cultural communication skills, as a crucial component of language proficiency, are not only relevant to individuals' academic and career development but also crucial for fostering friendly exchanges and cooperation between nations. Therefore, cultivating students' cross-cultural communication skills has become one of the key issues in the field of education in China. This research focuses on the domain of junior high school English teaching in China, aiming to explore how to effectively cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills in this specific educational context. The junior high school stage is a critical period for students' language acquisition and the development of cross-cultural awareness, making research at this stage significant in both theoretical and practical aspects. This study employs various research methods, such as literature review and case analysis, to understand cross-cultural communication skills and their application in secondary school English classrooms. Furthermore, relevant theories and practical experiences are comprehensively examined, with a specific focus on elucidating the strategies and methods for cross-cultural communication skill development. Corresponding conclusions are drawn based on the research findings.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communicative competence; Junior high school English teaching; China; Cultural differences; Communication strategies.

## 1. Introduction

As globalization continues to deepen, the importance of cross-cultural communication skills is increasingly highlighted in modern society. In China, with the growing frequency of international exchanges and cooperation, there is a rising demand for cross-cultural communication skills among people. As a crucial language proficiency, cross-cultural communication skills are not only relevant to individuals' academic and career development but also crucial for fostering friendly exchanges and cooperation between nations. Therefore, cultivating students' cross-cultural communication skills has become one of the key issues in the field of education in China. This research focuses on the domain of junior high school English teaching in China, aiming to explore how to effectively cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills in this specific educational context. The junior high school stage is a critical period for students' language acquisition

and the development of cross-cultural awareness, making research at this stage significant in both theoretical and practical aspects. In the domain of junior high school English teaching in China, it is essential to analyze specific strategies for cultivating cross-cultural communication skills adapted to the characteristics and learning needs of Chinese junior high school students. This research aims to complement existing studies on cross-cultural communication skill development in junior high school English teaching in China, contributing to enhancing students' cross-cultural communication proficiency and promoting the advancement of education and teaching practices. This study explores how to effectively cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills in junior high school English teaching in China. To address this issue, various research methods such as literature review and case analysis will be employed to understand cross-cultural communication skills and their application in secondary school English classrooms. Furthermore, relevant theories and

practical experiences will be comprehensively examined, with a specific focus on elucidating the strategies and methods for cross-cultural communication skill development. Finally, corresponding conclusions will be drawn based on the research findings.

## 2. Literature Review

The concept of intercultural communication competence was proposed by Young Yun Kim in 1991, who regarded it as a necessary condition for successful intercultural communication, involving the management of cultural differences [1]. However, within academia, there isn't a universally agreed-upon definition of "intercultural communication competence," with scholars both domestically and internationally exploring the concept from different perspectives. Brent Ruben defines intercultural communication competence as the ability to meet personal needs and achieve predefined goals while engaging with people across different linguistic contexts [2]. Hammer and Wiseman view intercultural communication competence as the knowledge, motivation, and skills exhibited by different cultural groups during appropriate communication [3].

Bi Jiwu defines intercultural communication competence as the ability to effectively communicate in intercultural environments, where individuals possess a strong cross-cultural awareness and are adept at overcoming cultural interference, identifying cultural differences, and successfully engaging in communication [4]. Yang Ning considers intercultural communication competence to involve language learners' ability to adapt to and bridge cultural differences through comparison, accommodation, and effective communication [5].

People from different countries and regions around the world have diverse cultural backgrounds. In the process of communication and interaction, familiarity with both one's own culture and that of the other party contributes to effective intercultural communication, making it truly meaningful. Communication behaviors are both social and cultural, inevitably encountering issues and obstacles from various relevant domains such as politics, economics, culture, and religion, with culture being a key factor [6]. Different ethnicities and countries around the world have unique cultural backgrounds and languages. In communication activities, individuals tend to use their own ways of thinking and language to communicate with others. Intercultural communication competence is the ability to demonstrate multicultural awareness in the necessary process of communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. By cultivating the multicultural awareness of communicators, communication issues arising from in-

dividual cultural differences can be effectively avoided.

## 3. The Significance of Intercultural Communication Competence in Junior High School English Teaching

### 3.1 Analysis of Teaching Objectives

The "Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard (2022 Edition)" (hereinafter referred to as the "Curriculum Standard") clearly proposes the requirement to cultivate students' awareness and ability of intercultural communication, advocating for expanding students' horizons through English learning, enhancing their confidence in national culture and patriotism, and guiding them to form "three outlooks" in line with the mainstream trend [7]. Under the "Curriculum Standard," English education transcends traditional language instruction and cultural awareness. It now serves as a conduit for Sino-foreign cultural exchanges, encouraging students to communicate intercultural from an international standpoint, guided by the principles of civilizational learning and cultural exchange [8]. Consequently, junior high school English educators should prioritize intercultural communication skills, explore innovative educational models, and integrate these into the teaching process.

Furthermore, according to the new curriculum standard, core literacy is the concentrated embodiment of the educational value of the English subject, covering four aspects: language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability [7]. Among them, cultural awareness focuses on understanding foreign cultures and appreciating outstanding cultures, with specific content being the cross-cultural cognition, attitudes, and behavioral choices demonstrated by students in the English subject. Teachers should incorporate cultural comparisons in English lessons, using varied resources and dynamic teaching methods to highlight East-West cultural differences, thereby boosting students' cultural confidence and awareness of intercultural communication.

Additionally, the 2020 "Opinions on Accelerating and Expanding the Opening-up of Education in the New Era" stress the need to develop globally competitive talents, highlighting the expansion of students' international perspectives as essential [9]. Therefore, the cultivation of students' intercultural communication literacy in junior high school English teaching is of great significance. On the one hand, the cultivation of students' intercultural communication literacy requires teachers to pay equal attention to language teaching and cultural teaching in English teaching, presenting English-speaking countries' cul-

tures to students as much as possible, which can deepen students' understanding of the diversity of world cultures. The cultivation of students' intercultural communication literacy requires teachers to guide students to establish the correct attitude towards cultural exchange, participating in intercultural communication with an attitude of cultural equality and respect, which is also an important content of intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication necessitates an understanding of each party's cultural differences. The updated English curriculum standards mandate that teachers incorporate British and American cultures into their teaching, contrasting these with Chinese culture to highlight intercultural differences. During intercultural communication lessons, teachers should integrate these cultural contrasts effectively, fostering students' awareness of cultural nuances and guiding them to adapt their communication styles to minimize misunderstandings [10].

## **3.2 Introducing Case Studies or Research**

### **3.2.1 Enhancing students' communication skills**

For instance, in the teaching of Unit 7 "Food Festival" in the Ren'ai version of the eighth grade English textbook, teachers can seize key words such as "food" and "festival" to permeate the comparison of Eastern and Western festival cultures in classroom teaching. For instance, during the Chinese Spring Festival, traditional foods like dumplings, chicken, and fish symbolize prosperity and family unity. Conversely, in English-speaking countries, foods like turkey, smoked ham, and Christmas pudding, along with red wine, represent happiness and celebration [10]. From the comparison of Eastern and Western festival cultures, students can observe significant cultural differences and diverse dietary habits. Students need to be aware of cultural differences and avoid cultural misunderstandings in the process of intercultural communication. To enhance intercultural communication skills, teachers can organize role-plays where students simulate dialogues between Chinese and English-speaking individuals, fostering cross-cultural exchanges. Students should work in small groups, ideally two to three per group, to ensure flexible language use during these exchanges. Through such cross-cultural communication training, students' language proficiency and communication skills can be enhanced. The cultivation of students' intercultural communication literacy helps integrate culture into English communication, thereby enhancing the standardization of students' English communication, minimizing the impact of cultural differences on English communication, and fully realizing the communicative function of English.

### **3.2.2 . Cultivating students' cultural awareness**

In English-speaking cultures, privacy is highly valued. Therefore, it is advisable to avoid inquiring about personal details such as age, occupation, income, and marital status when conversing with people from these cultures. In Chinese culture, however, it is common to ask such questions during conversations. Therefore, teachers must guide students to pay attention to these privacy-related issues and enhance their intercultural communication competence. For instance, a seventh-grade English textbook features an illustration where a young boy inquires about a lady's age, to which she replies, "It's a secret." This segment uses the scenario to teach students about conversational taboos in Western cultures, specifically advising against asking about age, particularly a woman's age. Through this approach, students are guided to learn about the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, while also enlivening the classroom atmosphere and achieving excellent teaching results. Teachers should effectively guide students to understand Western culture, thereby enhancing their intercultural communication skills and improving their overall English communication abilities [11].

## **4. Strategies and Methods for Cultivating Intercultural Communication Competence**

### **4.1 Fostering Cultural Awareness**

#### **4.1.1 Utilizing comparative teaching methods to enhance intercultural communication awareness**

Developing intercultural communication competence in secondary school English involves making students aware of cultural differences and teaching them to consciously navigate and resolve cultural conflicts in communication. To achieve this, mere explanations from teachers are insufficient; students must also engage in independent comparisons and analyses. Comparative analysis is a vital tool for enhancing students' intercultural communication skills. Through effective language comparisons, students can better understand the cultural similarities and differences between their native language and English, gaining insights into the uniqueness of other cultures, which enhances cognition and deepens understanding. Therefore, teachers should appropriately employ comparative teaching methods, tapping into students' existing cognitive experiences to vividly contrast the cultures behind both Chinese and English languages, thus enhancing students' intercultural communication awareness and prompting them to consciously abide by various cultural conventions

in communication [12].

In practice, teachers should use textbook dialogues to extract examples that reflect Eastern and Western cultural differences—such as greetings, farewells, and expressions of concern—and prepare comparative materials. When guiding students to compare cultural differences, teachers should emphasize the students' subjectivity, adopt a question-guided approach, and based on prepared examples, encourage students to draw upon their own experiences to cooperatively discuss and list more cross-cultural examples, discerning and analyzing the cultural similarities and differences among them. For instance, teachers might ask how students typically show concern in conversations. When students mention topics like age or income, teachers can explain that such topics are considered private in English-speaking cultures. The teacher can then timely explain that in English culture, these topics fall under the realm of privacy. Subsequently, guiding students to deeply contrast cultural differences allows them to realize that many topics freely discussed in domestic settings should be carefully avoided in English cultural contexts. Moreover, during the process of cultural comparison, teachers should address the conclusions drawn by students and guide them to formulate appropriate and tactful responses. For instance, when faced with compliments, Chinese people often express humility through self-denial, while Westerners readily accept compliments. Teachers can inspire students to explore suitable responses around this difference, thereby transferring intercultural communication awareness into language expression, ensuring students prioritize both language and culture [13].

#### **4.1.2 Strengthening appreciation of foreign literary**

Cultivating cultural literacy requires appreciating and utilizing Western literary heritage. Junior high school students should be encouraged to apply their understanding of Western classical literature in intercultural communication contexts. To foster an appreciation for Western literary heritage, students could read or recite passages from classical works as part of speech exercises in class. In junior high school English learning, some students use the term "culture" to refer to cultural background information; others mention cultural products (literary or artistic works). Therefore, extensive reading of literary works is highly recommended in their educational plans. Reading short stories, dramas, fables, and myths serves as an excellent way for students to understand foreign cultures, histories, geographies, customs, traditions, beliefs, and social values, enabling them to better comprehend the knowledge they acquire in the classroom [14]. This

approach provides students with authentic insights into English communication. Additionally, mastering specific terminology, appropriate expressions, and fluent translations helps students develop a robust understanding of the language. In the process of learning English, junior high school students inevitably encounter idioms, proverbs, slang, and allusions, which are important components of social language and culture. In junior high school English learning, when explaining idioms and proverbs, teachers should use the method of Chinese-English comparison to help students improve their ability to use idioms and proverbs, thereby enhancing the overall communication competence of junior high school students [14].

### **4.2 Training Language Skills**

#### **4.2.1 Strengthening oral communication training to enhance intercultural communication competence**

In secondary school English education, understanding language and cultural differences forms the foundation for nurturing students' intercultural communication competence. Moving from understanding to proficient application requires a process of practice. Effective intercultural communication extends beyond oral language mastery to include language usage, body language, and psychological aspects of communication. While students may possess the necessary cognitive knowledge, their inability to apply it flexibly in practice can result in the undesirable phenomenon known as "mute English." Therefore, integrating cultural understanding into language practice and conducting repeated exercises are essential. Teachers should enhance oral communication training to provide students with opportunities to apply and demonstrate their cross-cultural knowledge, enabling them to overcome pragmatic errors in practice and thereby enhancing their intercultural communication competence.

In oral communication training, teachers should create rich cultural contexts for students based on textbook content, utilizing real objects, multimedia materials, etc., to immerse students in specific cultural backgrounds, thus removing barriers to fluent English communication. In conjunction with specific communication topics, teachers can organize students into several small groups to engage in dialogue creation, skits, role-playing, and other communicative activities [13]. During communication, teachers should guide students to integrate language, application, and culture, analyze the expression styles and intentions of others from a cultural perspective, and respond appropriately with oral language. Teachers should encourage students to identify and correct pragmatic errors that clash with English cultural norms, gradually refining

their cross-cultural communication abilities. Furthermore, in oral practice, there are differences in body language between Chinese and Western communication cultures. Western body language is very rich, but most students are unaware of this. They often communicate with stiff posture and expression. Teachers can instruct students to appropriately use gestures like hugs and handshakes, depending on their speech content. This practice not only complements verbal communication but also facilitates fluent use of Western body language, significantly enhancing intercultural communication skills [14].

### **4.2.2 Creating language environments to provide cross-linguistic communication opportunities**

The primary challenge for Chinese students learning English is the lack of appropriate language environments. The absence of immersion in specific language environments limits students' opportunities for communication and practice, impeding their intercultural communication skills. Therefore, teachers should create language environments conducive to promoting students' intercultural communication. This includes creating environments for English performances, situational dialogues, etc., in the classroom. Additionally, teachers can play English songs for students in class to provide more opportunities for using English, enabling students to actively engage in communication and interaction from the perspective of English language and culture, experience firsthand feelings, accumulate cultural background knowledge, and enhance their intercultural communication competence [15].

For example, when teaching "Unit 7 Shopping" in the seventh grade, the teacher transforms the classroom into a Western-style shopping mall, displaying items with their names, prices, and different product areas labeled in English. Students can role-play as shop assistants or shoppers, engaging in dialogues as they select and discuss items of interest. For instance, a shop assistant may approach a customer and inquire, "Excuse me, may I help you?" to which the shopper responds, "Yes, I would like a pair of pants. Could you please introduce them for me?" Guiding students to use common polite expressions in English during the conversation and appropriately applying them fosters their understanding of the differences between English and Chinese polite expressions. Through role-playing, students practice intercultural communication awareness and fluently use English to communicate within specific language environments. Additionally, teachers can form study groups where members independently select roles, ensuring every student has the opportunity to participate and demonstrate, allowing

students to understand commonly used polite expressions and inquiry methods in Western shopping environments. By experiencing interpersonal communication cultures in specific language environments, students develop strong communication adaptability and cultivate confidence in intercultural communication. Teachers should facilitate dialogue scenarios, offering students practice opportunities in the classroom, monitoring their performance, and providing timely guidance. This approach enables students to practice intercultural communication skills in classroom dialogues, fostering active participation and a willingness to communicate across cultures.

### **4.3 Cultivating Intercultural Communication Skills**

#### **4.3.1 Leveraging technological means to activate intercultural communication awareness**

In the "Internet Plus" era, methods and channels for disseminating information have diversified significantly. Traditional "pyramid-style" information dissemination has evolved into a "networked model," offering students broader avenues to acquire knowledge. While the Translational Edition middle school English textbooks incorporate some culturally relevant materials, the content is limited and may not fully satisfy students' needs to explore cultural differences. In light of this, teachers can utilize technological means to explore more valuable educational resources, integrate them with textbook content, and present them visually using multimedia technology. This approach provides students with a more authentic experience and insights, thereby activating their intercultural communication awareness. Teachers can also encourage students to gather relevant information from the vast resources available online, enabling them to understand cultural differences among various countries and effectively prepare for efficient classroom learning through effective pre-reading [16].

For instance, when teaching the "Unit 2 Colours" from the Translational Edition ninth-grade textbook, teachers can assign pre-reading tasks for students to search for information online. Students could research commonly preferred colors in China and their symbolic meanings. They can then explore Western color culture and analyze how the same colors are perceived differently in different countries. This task teaches students to collect and organize information effectively. Subsequently, during the class introduction phase, teachers can use technological means to allow students to initially understand the differences in color culture between countries by observing pictures or videos, providing them with a visual impact

and fostering thoughts on cross-cultural differences. For example, by comparing images of Western and Chinese weddings, students may notice that weddings in Western countries predominantly feature white, symbolizing the purity of love, while Chinese weddings mainly feature red attire for both the bride and groom. Through such observations, students gain insights into the differences in color culture between Western countries and China, deepening their understanding of the unit content [15]. Based on this, teachers can seize the opportunity to prompt students to think with questions such as: “Why are weddings in Western countries mainly white, while weddings in China are mainly red? What else did you find?” Visuals and guided questions help develop students’ intercultural communication awareness. By using advanced teaching techniques and multimedia, teachers can create a more engaging English classroom environment that deviates from traditional methods. Additionally, teachers can use internet technology to enhance textbook content with visual teaching resources, making a more impactful learning experience. This is an effective method to activate students’ intercultural communication awareness and achieve teaching effects that traditional lecture-based teaching cannot achieve.

### **4.3.2 Designing fully English-Language classrooms to cultivate students’ intercultural communication skills**

The biggest obstacle encountered by junior high school students in English language learning is the lack of a good English environment. During junior high school English instruction, teachers should design fully English-immersive classrooms and consistently communicate in English, enhancing students’ interaction opportunities with the language. In classroom practices, teachers should mandate the use of English for discussions and responses, thereby improving students’ English communication skills. This approach boosts students’ English input and output, fostering their intercultural communication skills [17].

For example, when studying “Welcome to Our School!” lesson, teachers can use dialogue to introduce the topic: “Good morning, boys and girls. Welcome to our school! In school, there are many subjects. Which is your favorite subject?” Teachers can prompt students to discuss their favorite subjects—English, Chinese, Math, Arts, History, Music, and PE—encouraging cooperative dialogue. For instance, Student A may ask, “Which subject do you like best?” and Student B responds, “I like... best.” Then Student A continues, “Why?” and Student B answers, “Because it... What about you?” In this dialogue process, students can understand each other’s favorite subjects and

practice their oral communication skills. Next, the teacher may ask, “Look at our school. Is it beautiful? Do you like it? I think our school is beautiful. What can you see in the school?” The teacher can display a set of pictures of the school while asking questions. Students can then express what they see in the pictures based on their daily experiences, such as, “I can see many tall trees, beautiful flowers and grass, some buildings, and a playground.” Next, students could role-play as visitors and school receptionists to further practice their English.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study, through comprehensive analysis and case studies, proposes a series of strategies and methods to cultivate cross-cultural communicative competence among students in junior high school English teaching in China. The research emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness and enhances students’ cross-cultural communication awareness and skills through comparative teaching methods, strengthening the appreciation of foreign literature, enhancing oral communication training, creating language environments, and leveraging technological means. Additionally, the study points out the importance of designing fully English-language classrooms to cultivate students’ intercultural communication skills. The implementation of these strategies can improve students’ English language input and output, thereby effectively enhancing their cross-cultural communication skills. Ultimately, these findings are of significant theoretical and practical importance for promoting the advancement of educational and teaching practices, helping students to better adapt to and participate in international exchanges in the context of globalization.

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