

Strategies for Cultivating Intercultural Communicative Competence in English Education: A Case Study of the Lesson 'Neither pine nor apple in pineapple' from Unit 2 Exploring English in Compulsory English Textbook 1

Tingting Zeng

China West Normal University, Nanchong 637009, China

Email: 3314363350@qq.com

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Abstract

In the context of globalization, intercultural communicative competence has become one of the essential core competencies for talents in the 21st century, particularly playing a crucial role in English education. With the increasing frequency of international exchanges, cultivating students' intercultural awareness, understanding, and communication skills is of great significance for promoting their comprehensive development and enhancing their international competitiveness. This study adopts a case study approach, focusing on effective strategies for cultivating intercultural communicative competence in English education, with the specific case of the lesson "Neither pine nor apple in pineapple" from Unit 2 Exploring English in Compulsory English Textbook 1, published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. It aims to uncover the actual cultivation pathways and effects of intercultural communicative competence in English classrooms. The study found that through the implementation of a series of teaching strategies such as cultural introduction, close reading of texts, role-playing, group discussions, and extended reading in the lesson "Neither pine nor apple in pineapple," students' intercultural communicative competence was effectively enhanced. These strategies not only strengthened students' cultural awareness and sensitivity but also promoted the development of their critical thinking and language proficiency. Furthermore, the study also found that when implementing these strategies, teachers should focus on students' agency, encouraging their active participation and reflection to maximize teaching effectiveness.

Keywords

Intercultural Communicative Competence; English Education; Teaching Strategies

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Intercultural communicative competence refers to an individual's ability to effectively communicate, understand, and collaborate with people from different cultural backgrounds in the context of globalization. This competence encompasses various aspects, including language skills, cultural awareness, social skills, and the ability to adapt to different cultural environments. It not only requires individuals to master and utilize foreign languages for effective communication but also demands a deep understanding and respect for diverse cultures, as well as the flexibility to adjust one's behavior and communication style in cross-cultural contexts.

In today's increasingly globalized world, the importance of intercultural communicative competence is becoming increasingly prominent. With the frequent and in-depth international exchanges, talents with intercultural communicative competence can stand out in multicultural environments and become important forces driving international cooperation and development. This competence not only helps individuals better integrate and excel in multinational corporations, international organizations, and other institutions but also promotes understanding and harmonious coexistence among different cultures, reducing cultural conflicts and misunderstandings.

The cultivation of intercultural communicative competence has become an indispensable part of contemporary English education.

Firstly, English, as a global common language, is an important tool for cross-cultural communication. Mastering English not only means being able to communicate effectively with international friends but also means being able to understand and integrate into communication situations in different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, emphasizing the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence in English education helps enhance students' international vision and cross-cultural communication skills.

Secondly, with the advancement of globalization, more and more students have the opportunity to go abroad and participate in international exchanges and cooperation. In this process, they not only need to have a solid language foundation but also require an understanding and respect for different cultures, as well as the ability to flexibly respond in cross-cultural contexts. Therefore, strengthening the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence in English education helps lay a solid foundation for students' international exchanges and cooperation.

Finally, the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence is also an important way to enhance students' comprehensive qualities. By learning English and understanding different cultures, students can broaden their horizons, enhance their cultural literacy and aesthetic abilities. At the same time, the cultivation of this competence also helps improve students' innovative thinking and problem-solving abilities, laying a solid foundation for their future development.

1.2. Research Purpose

Taking the example from Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press' English Compulsory Textbook 1, Unit 2, "Neither pine nor apple in pineapple," this paper aims to analyze and explore effective strategies for cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence in English language teaching to provide relevant theoretical and practical guidance to frontline English teachers.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, research on the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence in English education has seen explosive growth, with researchers exploring this topic from various perspectives, primarily focusing on the following aspects.

2.1. Construction of Cultural Syllabi

The construction of cultural syllabi in English education serves as the foundation for cultivating intercultural communicative competence. Researchers generally agree that English teaching should not only focus on the training of language skills but also emphasize the imparting of cultural knowledge. This includes introducing cultural customs, historical backgrounds, and values of the target language countries to help students better understand and respect different cultures. The design of syllabi should emphasize practicality and pertinence, formulating appropriate teaching content and methods based on students' actual needs and learning levels. For example, some studies have proposed a teaching mode that combines cultural content with language skills, using activities such as situational simulations and role-playing to enable students to experience and understand cultural differences in actual communication.

2.2. Effectiveness of Teaching Strategies

The choice of teaching strategies is crucial for the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence. Research shows that adopting diversified teaching strategies can significantly improve students' intercultural communicative competence. For instance, combining methods such as cultural immersion, comparative analysis, task-based language teaching, and interactive teaching can comprehensively cultivate students' intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and proficiency. Cultural immersion involves immersing students in the cultural environment of the target language country to enhance their cultural awareness and sensitivity; comparative analysis helps students understand cultural differences by comparing communicative ways and habits across different cultural backgrounds; task-based language teaching sets specific intercultural communicative tasks for students to learn and master intercultural communicative skills through task completion; and interactive teaching uses group discussions, role-playing, and other interactive methods to enable students to learn and practice intercultural communicative skills in communication. Meanwhile, the selection of teaching strategies should be personalized according to stu-

dents' characteristics and needs to improve teaching effectiveness and learning motivation.

2.3. Assessment of Intercultural Communicative Competence

To measure students' intercultural communicative competence levels, researchers have developed a series of assessment tools and methods. These assessments typically include questionnaires, interviews, simulated communicative tasks, etc., to comprehensively assess students' intercultural communicative competence. The selection and design of assessment tools should emphasize objectivity and accuracy, while considering students' cultural backgrounds and learning experiences to ensure the fairness and validity of assessment results. Some studies have proposed project-based learning assessment methods, observing and analyzing students' communicative behaviors in intercultural situations through project tasks to assess their intercultural communicative competence.

2.4. The Role of Native Culture in Intercultural Communication

The importance of native culture in intercultural communication is increasingly being recognized. Research suggests that understanding and respecting one's own culture is the foundation for effective intercultural communication. Therefore, in English education, teachers should also focus on cultivating students' native cultural awareness and identity. By enabling students to understand their own cultural history, traditions, and values, their cultural confidence and pride can be enhanced, thereby better understanding and respecting other cultures. At the same time, teachers should encourage students to compare and analyze their native culture with the culture of the target language country to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and communication. This comparison and analysis not only help improve students' intercultural communicative competence but also cultivate their critical thinking and global vision.

2.5. Technology-Assisted Cultivation of Intercultural Communicative Competence

With the development of information technology, an increasing number of researchers are exploring how to use technological means to assist in the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence. For example, using virtual reality technology to simulate communicative scenarios in different cultural backgrounds or utilizing online platforms for cross-cultural communicative activities. These technological means can provide students with more realistic and vivid intercultural communicative experiences, helping to improve their intercultural communicative competence. Some studies have also explored the use of digital platforms such as social media and online forums to promote cross-cultural communication and interaction among students. These platforms not only provide students with abundant cross-cultural communication resources but also allow them to practice and im-

prove their intercultural communicative competence in practice.

In summary, research on the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence in English education covers multiple aspects, including the construction of cultural syllabi, the effectiveness of teaching strategies, the assessment of intercultural communicative competence, the role of native culture in intercultural communication, and technology-assisted cultivation of intercultural communicative competence. These studies provide rich theoretical and practical guidance for English teaching practice, contributing to the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence and enhancing their global competitiveness.

3. Theoretical Foundation

3.1. The Theory of Cross-Cultural Communication Styles

The Theory of Cross-Cultural Communication Styles delves into the variations in communication approaches and styles among individuals from different cultural backgrounds and their impact on communication effectiveness. In today's increasingly globalized world, cross-cultural communication has become an indispensable part of daily life and work.

Core Perspectives:

Directness vs. Indirectness

Cultures vary in their level of directness and indirectness in communication. For instance, Western cultures often prefer direct and explicit communication styles, while Eastern cultures may lean towards more implicit and euphemistic expressions. In the case of "Neither pine nor apple in pineapple," the directness and creativity of English word formation contrast sharply with the implicitness and regularity of Chinese word formation, helping students understand and adapt to different communication styles across cultures.

Individual Expression vs. Collective Consensus

Individualistic cultures encourage individual expression and self-actualization, whereas collectivist cultures emphasize collective interests and consensus. The personalized expressions and innovation in English word formation reflect characteristics of individualistic cultures, while Chinese word formation may focus more on norms and uniformity, embodying features of collectivist cultures.

Adaptability of Communication Styles

The Theory of Cross-Cultural Communication Styles emphasizes that understanding and adapting to different communication styles across cultures is crucial for enhancing cross-cultural communication skills. Through case studies, students can enhance their sensitivity and adaptability to various cultural communication styles, thereby facilitating effective communication in different cultural contexts.

3.2. Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory asserts that learning is an active process of con-

structuring knowledge rather than passively receiving external information. In the case study, students actively construct their understanding of English linguistic features by analyzing the rules and irregularities of English word formation, forming their own language learning strategies and knowledge systems. Constructivism emphasizes that learning occurs in specific contexts and through social interactions. Learning English word formation in this case can be viewed as contextualized learning, where students continually deepen their understanding of English linguistic features through interactions with word formation and discussions with peers and teachers. Additionally, learning involves multiple representations of knowledge and meaning-making. In this case, students can represent English word formation through various methods (such as vocabulary memorization, sentence construction, contextual understanding, etc.) and generate their unique understandings of English linguistic features.

3.3. Cognitive Load Theory

Cognitive Load Theory focuses on learners' cognitive load when processing information, which refers to the amount of information the brain can process within a specific timeframe. Excessive cognitive load can lead to information overload, affecting learning outcomes; conversely, too low cognitive load may render learning unchallenging, similarly hindering learning effectiveness. Cognitive Load Theory emphasizes the impact of information presentation and task design on learning outcomes. In the case study, teachers need to ensure that students' cognitive load remains at an appropriate level by designing well-thought-out tasks and activities (such as vocabulary memory games, morphological analysis, etc.) to guide students in effectively managing the complexity and diversity of English word formation. Additionally, Cognitive Load Theory underscores the importance of metacognitive strategies, where learners need to monitor and regulate their learning processes to maintain an appropriate level of cognitive load. In this case, students can reduce cognitive load and improve learning outcomes by reflecting on their learning processes and adjusting learning strategies.

3.4. Second Language Acquisition Theory

Second Language Acquisition Theory suggests that the native language has a significant impact on second language learning, including positive and negative transfer. In the case study, students can analyze the characteristics of English word formation to understand the influence of their native language on English learning and learn how to overcome the negative effects of language transfer, enhancing their English word formation and expression skills. Furthermore, the theory recognizes the phenomenon of language fossilization in cross-cultural communication. Language fossilization refers to the inability to further improve certain language features (such as pronunciation, grammar, etc.) after reaching a certain level in second language acquisition. In this case, students can recognize the existence of language fossilization

and learn how to continue learning and improving, avoiding stagnation in language learning. Second Language Acquisition Theory also emphasizes the importance of learning motivation and learning strategies. In this case, teachers can stimulate students' interest and motivation in learning and guide them to adopt effective learning strategies (such as vocabulary memorization, grammar practice, oral communication, etc.) to improve their English word formation and expression skills.

4. Case Background and Analysis

4.1. Case Introduction

4.1.1. Main Content

This lesson employs humorous language to uncover some perplexing "crazy" phenomena in English. Starting with examples from daily life, such as the absence of "ham" in "hamburger," the lack of "egg" in "eggplant," and neither "pine" nor "apple" in "pineapple," the article prompts in-depth reflection on English vocabulary construction and usage. Through numerous vivid examples, the author showcases the diversity and creativity of English and guides readers to ponder the uniqueness of this linguistic phenomenon.

4.1.2. Cultural Background

This lesson is excerpted from Richard Lederer's *Crazy Books*, reflecting the unique charm of English as a global language. As an artificial language, English has undergone continuous evolution and development in its vocabulary and grammatical rules throughout history, forming today's colorful and flexible language system. Meanwhile, English has been deeply influenced by diverse cultures and historical backgrounds, making it even more diversified and innovative in expression.

4.1.3. Teaching Objectives

(1) Enhance English Reading Skills

By studying this lesson, students can master methods to grasp the main idea through prediction and skimming, as well as the ability to obtain important information through close reading and correctly organize the relationships between information.

(2) Spark Interest in English Learning

The humorous language used in the lesson to uncover the "crazy" phenomena of English can stimulate students' curiosity and desire to explore English, thereby enhancing their interest in learning the language.

(3) Cultivate Cross-cultural Awareness

By learning about these "crazy" phenomena in English, students can gain a deeper understanding of the diversity and creativity of English culture, thereby cultivating their cross-cultural awareness and international perspective.

(4) Improve Logical Thinking Skills

The examples and reasoning methods in the lesson can guide students to deeply re-

flect on the characteristics and rules of English, cultivating their logical thinking and critical thinking skills.

(5) Enhance Language Application Skills

By studying this lesson, students can better understand the cultural connotations behind English vocabulary and flexibly apply what they have learned in practical situations, thereby improving their language application skills.

4.2. Identification of Cross-cultural Elements

4.2.1. Cultural Connotation of Vocabulary

(1) Origin and Historical Evolution of Vocabulary

The word "Pineapple" was not directly formed by combining "pine" (pine tree) and "apple"; rather, it has a complex historical evolution. It originally derived from the Spanish word "Pina," meaning pinecone. Later, during its dissemination in England, the word "apple" was added to emphasize its botanical nature, thus forming "pine-apple." This evolution of vocabulary reflects the adaptability and innovativeness of English vocabulary in cross-cultural communication.

Similarly, the word "hamburger" has evolved from the German "Hamburg Steak" to the American hamburger. This process incorporated American cultural characteristics, such as the addition of bread, resulting in the widely recognized hamburger of today.

(2) Cultural Symbolism and Metaphor

In certain cultures, pineapples may carry specific symbolic meanings or metaphors, such as representing enthusiasm, friendship, or prosperity. These symbolic meanings may be related to the appearance, taste, or growing environment of pineapples, although they are not directly mentioned in this text. However, by understanding these cultural symbols, we can gain a deeper understanding of the meanings and uses of pineapples in different cultures.

As one of the representatives of American culture, the hamburger also carries rich cultural symbolism and metaphors. It may represent American fast-food culture, the spirit of freedom, or innovation. By understanding the cultural background of the hamburger, we can better comprehend its meaning and value in cross-cultural communication.

4.2.2. Differences in Language Habits

(1) Naming Conventions

Naming conventions in English are often related to factors such as the origin, historical evolution, or cultural symbolism of vocabulary. For instance, the naming of "pineapple" reflects the adaptability and innovativeness of English vocabulary in cross-cultural communication, while the naming of "hamburger" embodies the uniqueness and innovative spirit of American culture.

Compared to English, other languages may focus more on the immediacy, descriptiveness, or symbolism of vocabulary when naming. This difference in naming con-

ventions reflects the uniqueness and diversity of different cultures in language expression.

(2) Vocabulary Use and Context

In English, the use of vocabulary like "pineapple" and "hamburger" is often associated with specific contexts and scenarios. For example, when mentioning pineapples, people may associate them with their unique taste, appearance, or growing environment; whereas when mentioning hamburgers, they may think of fast-food culture, American culture, or social occasions.

In other languages, the use of these vocabulary items may also be linked to specific contexts and scenarios, but the specific meanings and usages may vary across cultures. This difference in vocabulary use and context reflects the flexibility and diversity of different cultures in language expression.

4.3. Setting Teaching Objectives

4.3.1. Stimulating Cultural Curiosity and Exploration Desire

By presenting this phrase in an interesting way, stimulate students' curiosity about English culture and language phenomena, encouraging them to actively explore the differences in language expression across different cultural backgrounds.

4.3.2. Enhancing Cultural Sensitivity and Understanding

Guide students to understand that the vocabulary composition and expression methods in English are often closely related to its cultural background and historical development, thereby cultivating their cultural sensitivity and enabling them to better understand and respect cultural differences.

4.3.3. Strengthening Language Analysis and Comparison Abilities

Encourage students to compare the composition and meanings of vocabulary in different languages and analyze the uniqueness and creativity in English expressions. This will help them more accurately understand and use language in cross-cultural communication.

4.3.4. Cultivating Cross-cultural Communication Abilities

Although this phrase does not directly involve practical scenarios of cross-cultural communication, learning it can indirectly enhance students' awareness and abilities in cross-cultural communication. For example, in communication, they can more flexibly respond to challenges posed by cultural differences, adopting an open and inclusive attitude to understand and accept different language expression methods.

4.3.5. Stimulating Learning Interest and Motivation

Through this language phenomenon filled with interest, stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning English, making them more willing to invest time and effort in improving their cross-cultural communication abilities.

4.4. Implementation Process and Analysis of Case-Based Teaching

4.4.1. Implementation Process of Teaching

(1) Lead-in

Teacher's Activity: Present a picture of a pineapple and ask the students, "Is there pine or apple in pineapple?" to introduce the theme of the lesson.

Students' Activity: Observe the picture, ponder over the question, and answer the teacher's inquiry.

Classroom Interaction: Create a situation through the picture and question to stimulate students' interest and curiosity, paving the way for subsequent lesson content.

(2) Pre-reading

Teacher's Activity: Guide students to predict the content of the text based on its title and accompanying pictures.

Students' Activity: Make predictions based on the title and pictures, and record their predictions.

Classroom Interaction: Encourage students to make bold predictions, cultivating their predictive abilities and anticipation for reading.

(3) While-reading

Teacher's Activity:

Fast Reading: Require students to quickly read the text to verify their predictions and summarize the main idea.

Detailed Reading: Guide students to read the text carefully, identify sentences reflecting the author's viewpoint, understand the details of the article, and complete related exercises.

Students' Activity:

Quickly read to verify predictions and summarize the main idea.

Carefully read the text, extract key information, and complete exercises.

Classroom Interaction:

The teacher leads students to gradually deepen their understanding of the article through questioning.

Students can discuss among themselves, sharing their understandings and discoveries.

(4) Post-reading

Teacher's Activity:

Guide students to summarize the article's structure, analyze the author's writing purpose, and the main theme of the article.

Organize discussions on the humor, craziness, and creativity of the English language, as well as the cultural connotations behind English vocabulary.

Students' Activity:

Summarize the article's structure and organize the relationships between information.

Engage in group discussions, share perspectives on the characteristics of the English language, and express their own viewpoints.

Classroom Interaction:

The teacher guides students to deeply consider the characteristics of English through questioning and discussion.

Encourage students to actively speak up, cultivating their critical thinking and intercultural communicative competence.

(5) Homework

Teacher's Activity: Assign homework, requiring students to complete a worksheet and search online for interesting English words and phrases.

Students' Activity: Complete the worksheet, search for, and organize interesting English words and phrases.

Classroom Interaction: Homework serves as a consolidation and extension of classroom learning, helping to enhance students' autonomous learning abilities and intercultural communicative competence.

4.4.2. Analysis of the Effectiveness of Teaching Strategies

(1) Creating Situations to Stimulate Interest: By creating situations through pictures and questions, students' interest and curiosity in learning are stimulated, paving the way for subsequent learning.

(2) Prediction and Verification: Guiding students to make predictions based on titles and pictures, and then verifying those predictions after skimming the text cultivates their predictive abilities and reading anticipation.

(3) Detailed Reading and Mastering Details: Through careful reading and guidance from exercises, students are helped to deeply understand the details of the article, enhancing their information integration and critical thinking skills.

(4) Discussion and Sharing: Organizing group discussions and sharing activities encourages students to actively speak up, cultivating their intercultural communicative competence and teamwork spirit.

4.4.3. Development of Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence

(1) Enhancement of Cultural Awareness: By discussing the humor, craziness, and creativity of the English language, as well as the cultural connotations behind English vocabulary, students gain a deeper understanding and awareness of English culture.

(2) Cultivation of Critical Thinking: During discussions, students need to analyze, evaluate, and express their own viewpoints, which helps cultivate their critical thinking and independent thinking abilities.

(3) Improvement of Intercultural Communicative Competence: Through group discussions and sharing activities, students learn how to communicate and cooperate with others in a multicultural environment, enhancing their intercultural communicative competence.

4.4.4. Results and Discussion

(1) Analysis of Student Performance: After students completed their study of the

lesson titled "Neither pine nor apple in pineapple," the author conducted a comprehensive assessment of their intercultural communicative competence. The assessment covered various aspects, including language use, cultural adaptability, and critical thinking. Through this assessment, the author aimed to understand whether students could use language accurately and appropriately in actual communication, whether they possessed the ability to flexibly adjust their behavior and attitudes in different cultural contexts, and whether they could independently think, analyze, and evaluate cross-cultural phenomena.

(2) Evaluation of Teaching Strategy Effectiveness: The author conducted an in-depth analysis of the practical effects of the teaching strategies in cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence. By comparing students' performance before and after the teaching, the author identified successful factors in the teaching strategies, such as situation creation, prediction and verification, detailed reading and grasping of details, as well as discussion and sharing, which all played a positive role in enhancing students' intercultural communicative competence. At the same time, the author also identified potential areas for improvement, such as the need to further strengthen students' sensitivity and inclusivity towards cultural differences, as well as to improve their critical thinking abilities.

(3) Implications for Teaching: Through in-depth research on this case, the author gained important insights into English education. Especially in terms of cultivating intercultural communicative competence, the author recognized that teachers need to constantly update their teaching concepts and methods, focusing on cultivating students' cultural awareness and critical thinking. At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to the design of practical activities, allowing students to exercise and enhance their communicative abilities in real cross-cultural communication situations. Furthermore, this teaching experience reminded teachers to pay attention to individual differences among students and teach according to their aptitudes, ensuring that every student can make progress in cultivating their intercultural communicative competence.

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