

Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory: Its Role in English Education Poverty Alleviation Along the BRI

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How to cite this paper: Liu, H. (2025). Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory: Its Role in English Education Poverty Alleviation Along the BRI. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 2(1), 57-67. ISSN Print: 3104-4263; ISSN Online: 3104-4271. <https://doi.org/10.63313/IJED.9036>
Published: 2025-12-31

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) promoting in-depth educational and cultural exchanges among participating countries, English education, as a core vehicle for cross-cultural communication, faces various challenges in its poverty alleviation efforts. These challenges include uneven distribution of educational resources, insufficient teaching capacity, ineffective pedagogical outcomes, and inadequate cultural adaptation. Grounded in the concept of international cooperation under socialism with Chinese characteristics, this study constructs a three-dimensional analytical framework integrating "Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory—Socialist International Cooperation Theory—Educational Poverty Alleviation Theory." Employing literature review and case analysis methods, it systematically explores how to apply cross-cultural adaptation theory to assist in English education poverty alleviation practices. By analyzing the existing foundations and core challenges of English education in BRI countries, and drawing on relevant cases such as China-Thailand cooperation, the study summarizes four key pathways: cultural integration, teaching optimization, systematic curriculum construction, and resource optimization and empowerment. The research indicates that cross-cultural adaptation theory aligns well with the principles of "mutual benefit and win-win cooperation" and the "community with a shared future for mankind," effectively enhancing the inclusion and effectiveness of educational poverty alleviation. Future efforts should further leverage institutional strengths, deepen the "university-government-enterprise-local community" collaborative mechanism, and optimize practical pathways by integrating the cultural characteristics and development needs of different countries, thereby contributing Chinese wisdom to promoting educational equity within the BRI framework and the global cause of educational poverty alleviation.

Keywords

the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory; poverty alleviation; English education; educational equity

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

1.1.1. Educational Exchanges and Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The proposal and development of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have expanded the scope of cooperation among participating countries to deeper people-to-people and cultural exchanges, particularly in education. This represents a concrete practice of the international cooperation concept of "mutual benefit and win-win cooperation" under socialism with Chinese characteristics [1]. It signifies the strengthening of educational collaboration between China and BRI partner countries, encompassing areas such as student exchanges, joint educational programs, and teacher training. These initiatives not only provide crucial local talent support for Chinese enterprises "going global" but also inject new vitality into the educational development of the countries involved.

However, the challenges of adapting pedagogy to this cultural diversity have become increasingly prominent. As the core vehicle for humanities exchange, language teaching faces the critical issue of overcoming cultural barriers. Guided by socialist core values and with respect for diverse cultural traditions, achieving the cross-cultural educational goal of "appreciating the beauty in each culture and sharing collective beauty" has emerged as a key challenge for educational connectivity under the BRI framework.

1.1.2. Challenges Facing English Education in BRI Partner Countries

Within BRI cooperation, English serves as an international lingua franca, playing a vital role as a communicative bridge. Consequently, the quality of English education directly impacts the breadth and depth of cultural exchange. Nevertheless, English education in some partner countries still confronts significant practical difficulties. Disparities in teaching resources—both hardware and software—between urban and rural areas are pronounced. In rural regions, funding shortages often result in outdated teaching technologies, hindering the integration of international educational resources into the classroom [5]. Furthermore, the teaching workforce is often understaffed and under-qualified, particularly in remote areas. Many teachers lack systematic professional training and adhere to relatively outdated teaching philosophies, failing to meet the demand for cultivating interdisciplinary English talents in the context of globalization. Moreover, the actual effectiveness of teaching is less than ideal. The "cramming-instruction" method remains prevalent, and cross-cultural elements are insufficiently integrated into the curriculum. These issues not only constrain local educational development but also subtly affect the supply of cross-cultural talent essential for the BRI.

1.2. Research Significance

Addressing the practical needs of talent cultivation under the BRI, this study focuses

on the socialist essence of educational poverty alleviation. It systematically analyzes existing research on English education, educational poverty alleviation, and cross-cultural communicative competence cultivation in BRI partner countries.

Theoretical significance: It lies in constructing a three-dimensional analytical framework integrating "Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory," "Socialist International Cooperation Theory," and "Educational Poverty Alleviation Theory." This framework deepens the theoretical integration of cross-cultural education and national strategy, promoting the extension and development of the theory of international educational cooperation with Chinese characteristics.

Practical significance: It involves exploring the application pathways of cross-cultural adaptation theory to provide practical solutions for achieving cultural respect and equal dialogue in educational poverty alleviation. This further highlights the inclusion and effectiveness of educational poverty alleviation with Chinese characteristics.

1.3. Research Methodology

This study primarily employs a combination of the following methods:

Literature Analysis and Synthesis: A comprehensive review of literature, including scholarly works, books, and reputable online resources, was conducted to strengthen the foundational understanding and further investigate the core tenets of Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory. Building upon existing academic achievements in educational poverty alleviation, the study synthesizes Chinese and English literature centered on the key viewpoints of this theory. This process facilitated the gradual construction of the paper's primary research framework.

Case Study Analysis: The research focuses on representative English education poverty alleviation projects along the Belt and Road as primary analysis objects. The aim is to learn from practice, continuously reflect and summarize findings, and thereby provide concrete, actionable recommendations for localized implementation. This approach ensures an organic integration of theory and practice.

2. Overview of Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory

2.1. Theoretical Connotation

Cross-cultural adaptation (intercultural adaptation/adjustment)[6] constitutes a core issue in cross-cultural communication research. When individuals enter a new cultural environment, they inevitably encounter significant changes in their daily lives and cultural contexts, face unfamiliar difficulties and challenges, and many even experience "culture shock"[7]. The process of cross-cultural adaptation is thus a process of personal transformation, encompassing changes in an individual's behaviors, ways of thinking, and emotional responses.

At the research level, studies on cross-cultural adaptation can be divided into

group-level and individual-level research. Initial research on cross-cultural adaptation, primarily from anthropological and sociological perspectives, examined cultural changes in societies triggered by cultural contact at the group level, focusing on identifying differences between cultures. Subsequently, understanding these differences became a growing concern for psychologists. Individual-level cross-cultural adaptation research primarily focuses on the psychological reactions and social integration of sojourners (such as expatriates, international students) in a new cultural environment, emphasizing changes in individual values, attitudes, and behaviors. The scope of research subjects has also expanded from immigrants and refugees to include international students, professionals, business people, missionaries, military personnel, diplomats, and travelers[2].

In fact, cross-cultural adaptation theory shares inherent affinities with the concept of international cooperation under socialism with Chinese characteristics. The core principles of "mutual benefit and win-win cooperation" and "equality and respect" championed by socialist international cooperation provide a value foundation for cross-cultural adaptation. Conversely, the relevant connotations of cross-cultural adaptation theory reflect the scientific nature of concepts like the "community with a shared future for mankind." Together, they form the theoretical underpinnings for poverty alleviation through English education.

3. English Education for Poverty Alleviation in BRI Countries: Foundations and Challenges

3.1. Realistic Foundations

3.1.1. Status Quo of Educational Resource Allocation

"The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has heightened the demands for English teaching in primary and secondary education, particularly emphasizing the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence. However, BRI partner countries currently face a widespread issue of uneven allocation of English teaching resources, which hinders the effective development of these skills. Urban areas typically enjoy greater access to educational resources, such as advanced teaching equipment, abundant learning materials, and reliable internet connectivity. In contrast, rural and remote regions often grapple with significant resource scarcity. This disparity is evident not only in hardware infrastructure but also in the availability of software resources, including curriculum content and teaching activities. For instance, while schools in urban areas of some partner countries can introduce internationalized English textbooks and online learning platforms, their rural counterparts struggle to allocate resources of comparable standard due to funding constraints and limited technical capacity. This imbalance in allocation directly impedes the effectiveness of poverty alleviation through education, slows the improvement of English education levels in impoverished regions, widens the educational gap between different areas,

and consequently affects the supply of comprehensively skilled English talents crucial for the advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative."

3.1.2. Status Quo of Teaching Faculty

Some schools face the challenge of teachers being responsible for multiple subjects," and the overall quality of the teaching faculty is uneven. A significant number of teachers lack systematic training in cross-cultural pedagogy and have not mastered interactive and contextualized teaching models, making it difficult for them to foster students' cross-cultural communication skills[3]. Furthermore, there is generally a lack of in-depth understanding among educators regarding the diverse English varieties and socio-cultural contexts of Belt and Road Initiative partner countries.

3.1.3. Status Quo of Education Level

"The state of English education across Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) partner countries varies significantly and faces numerous challenges that require prompt attention. In terms of teaching methodology, many regions still adhere to outdated, lecture-based classroom models, resulting in low student participation and insufficient practice in practical application. Students' performance, particularly in listening and speaking skills, is weak, and some students lack proficiency in oral expression. This sometimes leads to difficulties in communicating effectively with foreigners, which is directly related to their lack of authentic language use scenarios. Furthermore, the curriculum content is relatively monolithic, with insufficient integration of cross-cultural elements, making it challenging for students to communicate effectively across different cultural backgrounds. These issues not only hinder the overall progress of students' English proficiency but also pose obstacles to cultivating the talent required by the BRI, necessitating more systematic improvement measures."

3.2. Core Challenges

3.2.1. Challenges Stemming from Cultural Differences and Cognitive Bias

Significant differences exist in the cultural backgrounds, values, and educational philosophies of different countries. These differences can easily lead to misunderstandings or communication breakdowns in teacher-student interactions during the teaching and learning process. For example, students from some Central Asian countries may be more accustomed to traditional, teacher-centered instruction and exhibit a degree of resistance to the student-centered interactive approaches advocated by cross-cultural adaptation theory. Simultaneously, varying cultural perceptions of the "purpose of education" further increase the difficulty of pedagogical adaptation, which, at its core, is an issue of aligning differing cultural values and perspectives.

3.2.2. Challenges Arising from Inadequate Teaching Resources

The inadequacy of educational resources is also a prominent issue. In many regions along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the relatively underdeveloped economy has led to the uneven distribution of educational resources between urban and rural areas and among different regions. This not only restricts the popularization of English education, but also hinders the full implementation of the diversified teaching methods that cross-cultural adaptation theory relies on.

Furthermore, teachers who can deeply understand cross-cultural adaptation theory and proficiently apply it to English teaching in non-English-dominant contexts are extremely scarce. Many teachers themselves lack systematic knowledge of the English varieties and sociocultural backgrounds of BRI participating countries, and their teaching still largely takes standard British and American English as the sole model[4]. The development of teaching materials is also relatively lagging behind: the cultural introductions to BRI countries in existing textbooks are fragmented, and they fail to effectively integrate the life experiences and practical needs of learners in poverty-alleviation target areas. In addition, poverty-stricken regions often lack the conditions to leverage modern technologies for building virtual and simulated cross-cultural communication scenarios, which makes it difficult to achieve the immersive experience and situational learning emphasized in cross-cultural adaptation theory.

3.2.3. Challenges Posed by Policy Support and Collaborative Mechanisms

Although there is a macro-level layout for the educational cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)[1], the specific objectives, assessment methods, and resource supporting measures related to cross-cultural adaptability training are often not clearly defined. This situation is likely to lead teachers to focus more on the imparting of language skills in the process of project implementation, while neglecting the cultivation of cross-cultural cognition and adaptability.

Meanwhile, the cross-departmental and cross-institutional collaboration mechanisms also exert certain impacts. For instance, the lack of effective connection and feedback loops between theoretical research in universities, policy promotion by governments, and front-line teaching practices makes it difficult to rapidly popularize and apply outstanding theoretical achievements and practical experiences.

4. Practical Study on the Application of Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory in English Education Poverty Alleviation under the BRI Framework

4.1. Analysis of Successful Practical Cases

Taking the "China-Thailand Joint Institute of Higher Education English-Cross-Border E-Commerce Training Program" as an example, this program relies on cross-cultural adaptation theory and constructs a trinity teaching model of "Language Skills - Professional Competence - Cross-Cultural Literacy". The specific measures include: de-

veloping localized courses that integrate the comparison between Thailand's traditional culture, the culture of English-speaking countries and China's e-commerce culture into the curriculum; implementing interactive teaching methods, creating authentic cross-cultural communication scenarios through activities such as "Sino-Thai student pairing and cooperation" and "cross-border e-commerce simulation training"; and organizing supporting cross-cultural exchange activities, such as hosting the "Belt and Road Cultural Festival" and "Sino-Thai Business Etiquette Seminar", to attract the participation of teachers and students from both countries.

4.2. Problems Existing in the Practice Process

First, the partial emergence of cultural conflicts. There are differences in teaching rhythms and communication styles between Chinese and Thai teachers and students (e.g., Thai students tend to emphasize euphemistic expressions, while Chinese teachers prefer a relatively straightforward teaching style), which have led to certain misunderstandings in some classroom interactions.

Second, the regional imbalance in resource supply. The implementation conditions of the program in urban universities in Thailand are superior to those in rural universities. Rural areas lack cross-border e-commerce training equipment, which impairs the effect of immersive teaching.

Third, the insufficient cross-cultural teaching competence of teachers. Some Thai teachers have limited knowledge of Chinese culture and cross-border e-commerce, making it difficult for them to effectively guide students in cultural comparison and integration.

4.3. Discussion on Improvement Measures

First, strengthen special cross-cultural training[3]. Jointly organize "Workshops on Enhancing Cross-Cultural Teaching Competence" by Chinese and Thai universities, covering contents such as the core values of Chinese and Thai cultures, cross-cultural communication skills, and the interpretation of English education poverty alleviation policies.

Second, construct a regional resource sharing platform[3]. Relying on the technological advantages of Chinese universities, establish a "China-Thailand English Education Poverty Alleviation Resource Sharing Platform" to integrate high-quality resources such as excellent courses, training software, and cultural materials, enabling rural universities to access and use them free of charge. Secure special aid funds from the Chinese government to equip rural universities in Thailand with cross-border e-commerce training equipment and network facilities.

Third, improve the policy coordination mechanism. Establish a "university-government-enterprise" collaborative mechanism where enterprises provide internships for students, the government offers corresponding policy support, and universities are responsible for teaching implementation and effect feedback.

5. Integrating Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory with English Education for Poverty Alleviation in BRI Countries

5.1. A Cultural Integration-Based Approach to Language Learning

Guided by the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, efforts should be made to promote equal dialogue among different cultures and achieve inclusive coexistence. Focusing on the process of mutual cultural interaction and integration, cross-cultural adaptation theory provides an important theoretical basis for advancing English education poverty alleviation in regions along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). We can organize diverse cultural exchange activities, such as the "BRI International Cultural Festival" and "Cross-Cultural Online Dialogues" [3], to guide students to conduct in-depth exploration of the cultural customs and values of co-construction countries and perceive the cultural connotations embedded in language. Additionally, localized cultural projects should be designed in light of the unique characteristics of each country along the route—for example, the Silk Road culture in Central Asia and the religious culture in Southeast Asia. Thematic activities such as "Exploration of Silk Road Culture" and "Comparison of Similarities and Differences in Festivals of Co-construction Countries" can be carried out to enhance students' cultural identity and cross-cultural tolerance. Meanwhile, attention should be paid to integrating elements of Chinese culture: introducing traditional Chinese culture and modern development achievements into the curriculum will help students gain a deeper understanding of the cultural roots underlying the BRI and facilitate two-way mutual learning between Chinese and foreign cultures.

5.2. Optimizing Teaching through Integrated Cross-Cultural Communication Skills

As the leading force in classroom teaching, teachers play a crucial role in English education poverty alleviation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Teachers should take the initiative to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural backgrounds of students from different regions, and design targeted teaching plans by virtue of cross-cultural communication skills to fully stimulate the learning potential of each student. Meanwhile, cross-cultural communication skills also involve the cultivation of non-verbal communication competence[5], which helps students express themselves more confidently in cross-cultural situations. Organizing activities such as group discussions or role-plays can promote students' active participation in cross-cultural communication and improve their language proficiency and cross-cultural adaptability.

5.3. Systematic Construction Path of Curriculum Based on Adaptation Theory

Curriculum design is a pivotal link in poverty alleviation through English education. In line with this theory, the content of English courses should strike a balance be-

tween Chinese and Western cultures, involving not only the teaching of Western cultural knowledge but also the introduction of local Chinese culture. For instance, content related to cultural differences among countries along the Belt and Road can be incorporated into the curriculum [4]. By comparing the distinct characteristics of verbal and non-verbal communication between Chinese and Western cultures, students can be helped to gain a clearer understanding of the obstacles in cross-cultural communication and the corresponding coping methods.

Furthermore, courses can integrate project-based learning (PBL) and design culture-themed learning tasks—such as the exploration of Silk Road culture and the comparison of similarities and differences between Chinese and Western festivals. These tasks guide students to deepen their understanding and application of the cross-cultural adaptation theory through practice [5].

5.4. Implementation Path of Resource Optimization and Empowerment

Against the backdrop of the Belt and Road Initiative, English teaching should proactively leverage artificial intelligence (AI) technology to bring immersive and diverse cultural learning experiences to students. Taking DeepSeek as an example, its powerful resource integration capabilities and intelligent teaching services open up new avenues for the cultivation of cross-cultural communication competence.

Specifically, teachers can utilize DeepSeek's classroom teaching assistance functions to input cultural themes related to countries and regions co-building the Belt and Road during the lesson preparation stage—such as the food culture of Southeast Asian countries and the ethnic costumes of Central Asian countries. DeepSeek can automatically search for and integrate high-quality multimedia learning resources (e.g., documentaries from National Geographic Channel) according to teaching needs, enabling teachers to obtain diverse and authoritative cross-cultural teaching materials.

Meanwhile, teachers can design classroom interaction sessions using DeepSeek's real-time Q&A function. After watching video materials, students can ask questions about cultural phenomena presented in the videos at any time—for instance, why Islamic countries taboo eating with the left hand and what the cultural connotation of Thai smiles is—and DeepSeek can provide accurate answers to these inquiries.

Additionally, DeepSeek can automatically summarize students' interest preferences in different cultural themes based on their interactive performance and knowledge comprehension, then push personalized cross-cultural learning resources in a targeted manner, continuously expanding students' cultural horizons. Teachers can also use its homework grading and analysis functions to precisely design situational writing tasks related to cross-cultural communication. DeepSeek can automatically grade students' writing assignments, analyze whether students have a thorough understanding of the target culture and whether their verbal expressions are appropriate, and provide personalized revision suggestions. With such real-time feed-

back, students can revise their work repeatedly, further improving their written expression skills [4].

6. Conclusions

6.1. Research Conclusions

Centering on the practical requirements of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for educational connectivity, this study takes the cross-cultural adaptation theory as the basic analytical framework to conduct an in-depth investigation into the functional paths, implementation effects, and main obstacles of this theory in poverty alleviation through English education in countries along the Belt and Road. The research results show that the cross-cultural adaptation theory can not only theoretically support the achievement of the goals of poverty alleviation through English education under the BRI but also effectively promote educational development in regions along the route through the combination of multiple practical paths.

Looking ahead, poverty alleviation through English education needs to further strengthen the exertion of the advantages of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and deepen the collaborative mechanism of "universities - government - enterprises - local communities"; it is necessary to enhance the dynamic adaptation between the cross-cultural adaptation theory and the practice of poverty alleviation through education, optimize practical paths in light of the cultural characteristics and development needs of different countries, so as to provide more Chinese wisdom and Chinese solutions for promoting educational equity in the joint construction of the Belt and Road and advancing the development of global poverty alleviation through education.

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