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AI-Assisted Chinese-Western Cultural Comparison Course: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

This paper develops a framework for an AI-assisted Chinese-Western cultural comparison course by bringing together Byram's intercultural communicative competence model, Vygotsky's constructivism, and Huang et al.'s theory of cultural competence development. It identifies five interrelated course goals: cultural knowledge, cross-cultural practical ability, critical cultural awareness, AI collaboration literacy, and human-AI symbiosis awareness. To achieve these goals, three teaching strategies are proposed. First, content should be reconstructed through multimodal and professionally adapted resources; second, the learning process should be immersive and adaptive; third, assessment should be data-driven and multidimensional to evaluate the goals. The implementation conditions of these strategies are further discussed in terms of teacher AI competence, human-AI boundary negotiation, algorithmic bias mitigation, and differentiated task design. It provides a structured basis for AI-assisted Chinese-Western cultural comparison teaching and for future empirical testing of its effects.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence; Chinese-Western Cultural Comparison Course; Intercultural Communicative Competence; Human-AI Symbiosis; Differentiated Task Design

1. Introduction

The design and delivery of Chinese-Western cultural comparison courses are being reshaped by multimodal large language models and generative AI. Traditionally, it usually compares philosophy, language, festivals, myths, family and social structures, with the aim of helping students understand other cultures, examine their own cultural awareness, and the ability to communicate across differences. In practice, however, the course has many problems: outdated materials, weak cultural experience, uneven student preparation, and limited room for deep discussion (Zhang, 2019). Many textbooks are written mainly for English majors or other liberal arts majors, and comparisons often stop at listing surface differences, rarely asking why those differences exist (Gu, 2019).

AI already offers technically feasible ways to generate comparative cases, simulate cross-cultural dialogues, and tailor tasks to learners at different levels (Liu et al., 2024). Yet "can help" does not mean "know when to help." Bringing AI into this course is not about making the classroom look more modern. More importantly, can it help students form a clearer cultural position while enabling them to engage with people from different backgrounds in a globalized and digital environment? Cultural comparison instruction today needs to pursue human-AI symbiosis and relational rationality, moving beyond simple multicultural exposure, through coexistence, difference, connection, and mutual learning,

Existing studies have explored pedagogical uses such as multimodal generation and dialogue simulation, but the capabilities of each approach are often disconnected from the actual needs of this course. Against this background, this study is guided by three research questions: (1) What goals should be set for AI-assisted Chinese–Western cultural comparison course? (2) What strategies can be proposed at the content, process, and assessment levels? (3) What implementation conditions are required for these strategies to work in practice? By answering these questions, the paper develops a goal–strategy–condition framework and provides a structured basis for future empirical testing.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Theoretical Foundations of Chinese-Western Cultural Comparison Course

Chinese-Western cultural comparison teaching draws on three theories. Byram's intercultural communication model (1997) is useful because it treats competence as more than language use. Learners need openness and curiosity, cultural knowledge, the ability to interpret and relate, the ability to discover and interact, and critical cultural awareness.

Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory provides a basis for understanding how learning takes place. In this account, learners construct knowledge through interaction with tools, questions, tasks, and contexts, while teachers supply scaffolding. So the course should not only present comparisons, but create task-based projects, conflicting viewpoints, negotiable debates and finally produce individual reflection. During the process, AI can act as a tool or partner here, to scaffold students for more abilities with deep and critical thinking.

From the standpoint of educational values in the AI era, Huang et al. (2021) put forward a theory of cultural competence development. Their account extends conventional intercultural competence toward hyper-cultural competence and a future shared by humans and AI. In practice, AI-assisted teaching should help students respond to cultural shifts that involve AI, rather than simply moving between human cultures. For a Chinese-Western comparison course, this means the human-machine relationship deserves a place alongside cultural difference.

The three theories contribute different but connected elements: Byram defines the dimensions of competence, Vygotsky explains their development, and Huang et al. extend the discussion to human-AI relations. Section 2.3 draws them together into course goals.

2.2. Application of Artificial Intelligence in Chinese-Western Cultural Comparison Course

AI in education has moved beyond skill practices. In cultural and language teaching, it now appears in resource making, dialogue simulation, feedback, and learning support. Moreover, multimodal models can turn a short prompt into images, audio, or video, which makes cultural content easier to see and hear; digital human technology can also add facial expression, tone, and movement with speech and emotion cues, so the understanding of the learning and teaching could be more natural and interactive.

Such capabilities matter for cultural learning because gestures, timing, silence, interpersonal distance, and tone carry much of a culture's implicit meaning. In etiquette situations, these cues are often implicit and hard to explain via words in textbook. AI can make them visible and give students repeated practice, which may reduce the load of guessing hidden rules (Liu et al., 2024).

Within cross-cultural teaching, generative AI has supported the analysis of cultural phenomena, the simulation of intercultural dialogue, and the optimization of textual structures. Large language models can support in-depth analysis of Chinese-Western cultural themes, when prompted to "compare the cultural roots of the concept of 'face' in China and the Western countries," AI can generate structured analysis from dimensions such as "collectivism vs. individualism" and "social network vs. individual achievement," combined with specific dialogue cases to aid understanding (Kong & Yang, 2025). Yang (2021) proposed a digital narrative ability in foreign languages framework, noting that AI can assist students in constructing cross-cultural narratives, enhancing the precision of cultural communication through narrative structure optimization and audience adaptation suggestions.

Research on pedagogical agents suggests that agents built on large models can assume several roles in supporting cultural learning (Lu et al., 2023). For example, AI can simulate virtual dialogues between Confucius and Socrates, allowing students to explore the differences between the Doctrine of the Mean and dialectical thinking through questioning. Alternatively, AI can serve as a cross-cultural advisor, providing feedback on the cultural appropriateness of students' business negotiation simulations (Deng et al., 2025). For more advanced applications, such as multi-agent collaboration, AI can play different roles to collaborate with students on project-based learning tasks, enhancing the abilities to tackle various cultural issues.

In assessment and ethics, the emphasis is moving away from a single final outcome

toward evaluation across multiple dimensions of the learning process. Teachers can therefore examine how learning unfolds instead of basing their judgement solely on the completed product. When students are telling stories, AI can help looking at narrative structure, cross-cultural awareness, and value expression (Yang, 2021). But using AI for assessment is not just a technical matter. It also raises ethical questions. AI should not become the only judge of student learning.

At the same time, classroom use of AI presents further challenges (Bai, 2025). Compared with conventional teaching, AI-assisted classes require teachers to lecture less and devote more attention to designing tasks, posing questions, and coordinating work with AI. These require teachers to have good knowledge of information literacy, educational ethics, and cross-cultural ability (Deng et al., 2025). Kong and Yang (2025) also point out that AI-generated material may carry ideological bias. From this perspective, teachers need to cultivate students to examine sources and claims instead of accepting whatever AI provides.

Taken together, the literature says more about using AI as a tool than about integrating it systematically into a Chinese-Western cultural comparison course. Work on multimodal generation, dialogue simulation and assessment remains scattered. The division of responsibility among teachers, students, and AI, and differentiated task design are usually treated as separate issues. This study intends to develop an integrated framework linking content, process, assessment, and implementation conditions for the AI-assisted Chinese–Western cultural comparison course.

2.3. From Theoretical Foundations to Course Goals

Read together, theoretical perspectives mentioned in Section 2.1 imply a coherent set of goals for the course. Byram's (1997) model suggests that students should acquire cultural knowledge, interpret and relate cultural meanings, discover and interact across cultural boundaries, and develop critical cultural awareness. Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist account further suggests that these goals are best pursued through task-based interaction, scaffolded dialogue, and individual reflection within the learner's zone of proximal development. Huang et al.'s (2021) theory adds a forward-looking dimension: in an AI-mediated environment, students should also develop relational rationality and an awareness of human-AI symbiosis, rather than merely moving between human cultures.

On this basis, the AI-assisted Chinese-Western cultural comparison course is organized around five connected aims: (1) cultural knowledge, together with the capacity to explain and analyze cultural differences; (2) practical cross-cultural competence in dialogue, conflict resolution, and cultural communication; (3) critical cultural awareness, including the ability to recognize stereotypes; (4) AI collaboration literacy, namely the ability to use AI critically and reflectively; and (5)

human-AI symbiosis awareness grounded in relational rationality. These goals serve as the reference point for the strategies to be presented in the following sections.

3. AI-assisted Strategies for Chinese-Western Cultural Comparison Course

The strategies for this AI-assisted course can be considered at three levels: content, learning process, and assessment. The strategies proposed below correspond to these points.

3.1. Multimodal and Professionally-Adapted Content Reconstruction

3.1.1. Generating Cultural Comparison Cases With AI

With carefully structured prompts, teachers can use AI to generate a varied set of cultural comparison cases in a relatively short time. The process can begin with a teacher-written prompt that defines the dimensions of comparison; AI then drafts a contextualized case, after which the teacher checks and revises it against disciplinary requirements for accuracy and critical depth. Under the philosophy theme, for example, teachers can direct AI to draft a comparison between Confucian benevolence and ancient Greek virtue, with an analysis across ethical foundations, social functions, and practical applications. Under the language theme, AI can generate a pragmatic comparison or scenario video of politeness strategies in Chinese and English, focusing on directness versus indirectness, the concept of face, and differences in cultural context. Under the food theme, it can explore the symbolic meanings of dietary culture in China and the West, illustrating how food relates to social structure, religious belief, and identity formation.

Under this division of work, AI supplies cases from multiple angles and prepares the first draft, while academic judgement remains with the teacher. Preparation becomes more efficient, and the cases could be revised from the teaching's perspective. Students are therefore led to a diversified context to develop a deeper understanding of cultures.

3.1.2. Building a Multimodal Resource Bank

Multimodal generation also allows AI to support a varied cultural teaching resource bank that can be updated on an ongoing basis. In the mythology unit, for instance, AI can generate narrative texts of the Chinese myth Nuwa Mending the Heavens and the Western myth of Prometheus, together with images styled to fit their respective cultural contexts, so that differences in cosmological views and in the image of the hero become visually clear. In the music unit, AI can produce comparative analyses of Chinese and Western classical music and synthesize short audio excerpts, allowing students to hear differences in scale, rhythm, and aesthetic ideals directly. In the architecture unit, it can create 3D comparative

models of Chinese gardens and Western geometric gardens, supplemented by automatically generated explanatory videos on the concepts of nature and spatial philosophy behind each form. Beyond these traditional themes, the resource bank can also cover newer material related to cultural competence, such as human-AI relationships in science fiction literature.

When new social or cultural issues become relevant, AI can also prepare supplementary cases, charts, and other materials for inclusion in the resource bank. Course content in this way stays connected to the present, and students come to see culture as something fluid and ongoing rather than fixed.

3.1.3. Major-specific Adaptation of Content Presentation

Since AI output can be readily adapted, teachers can present the same cultural theme with different emphases to suit the training objectives of particular student groups. When comparing Chinese and Western family concepts, for example, students majoring in language would work with cross-cultural comparisons of communication patterns within families, systems of address, and non-verbal behavior; for students with other backgrounds, the emphasis would shift to match their professional needs. This kind of content customization keeps teaching materials closely tied to students' disciplinary learning, which in turn supports motivation and gives students a clearer sense of academic gain.

3.2. Immersive and Adaptive Interaction Process Design

In this model, AI no longer serves only as a static source of materials; it participates in, supports, and helps reshape the teaching process as it unfolds. In the Chinese-Western cultural comparison course, AI's intelligent support for the teaching process is primarily reflected in the following three aspects.

3.2.1. Intelligent Q&A and Cross-Cultural Dialogue Simulation

A conventional classroom seldom offers frequent, authentic interaction with members of the target cultural groups. Generative large language models enable the creation of low-risk, high-fidelity cross-cultural dialogue scenarios. In immersive dialogue simulations, AI can portray virtual interlocutors from diverse cultural backgrounds to engage students in in-depth dialogues on specific themes. AI can not only simulate verbal behaviors and value systems aligned with its assigned cultural identity but also dynamically adjust its strategies based on student responses—agreement, questioning, or challenging—to provoke deeper critical thinking. For instance, when a student elaborates on China's "collectivism," the AI portraying a "western interlocutor" might follow up with: If personal dreams conflict with family expectations, how do you typically resolve this? In North American culture, people tend to…. Such immediate and intellectually charged cultural exchanges are difficult to achieve through traditional role-playing activities (Lu et al., 2023). After the dialogue, AI can serve as an

intelligent training partner to provide immediate feedback. It not only corrects language errors but also analyzes the appropriateness or inappropriateness of students' responses from the perspective of cross-cultural communication. AI can analyze: "In the dialogue, you directly criticized the other party's viewpoint. This might be seen as frankness in American culture but could seem somewhat impolite in British culture. It is recommended to try using more softening expressions like 'I see your point, but...'" (Kong & Yang, 2025).

3.2.2. The Companion Roles in Project-Based Learning

In project-based learning, AI teaching agents can play dual roles as teaching assistants and learning companions, providing scaffolded support for the entire project process.

During project initiation and planning, AI can help each group sharpen its driving question around the chosen theme and can suggest lines of inquiry and indexes of relevant resources. For a theme like comparing hero narratives in Chinese-Western mythology, AI could suggest starting from dimensions of background and type of challenge. During project execution and collaboration, AI could act as a learning companion responding to questions at any time. Furthermore, multiple AI agents with different roles can be constructed to engage in dialogues and debates with students, stimulating critical thinking (Lu et al., 2023). In the phase of creation and revision, AI can assist students in completing multimodal works, such as generating video script outlines, background music and visual materials, or translating and proofreading, allowing students to focus on in-depth content mining and creative expression.

3.2.3. Adaptive Feedback and Formative Learning Analytics

Through learning analytics, AI can give immediate, formative, and explainable feedback on work in progress. By examining interaction logs, the quality of questions, assignment drafts, it can locate knowledge gaps and comparative dimensions that students have missed. It then offers targeted suggestions: recommending additional sources, prompting alternative perspectives, or asking clarifying questions that help students revise and deepen their analysis. This feedback should remain formative rather than summative.

3.3. Data-Driven and Multidimensional Evaluation

3.3.1. Multimodal Process Evaluation

Evaluation in this course relies on more than final scores. By bringing together different kinds of learning data, AI can track and assess the learning process from three main sources.

The first is interaction behavior. AI records how students converse with virtual agents, including the quality of their questions, the cultural appropriateness of their responses, and their participation in group discussion. These records give a basis for

judging active inquiry and intercultural communication skills. The second source is students' digital work, such as cultural videos and project proposals. The third source is reflection texts. By analyzing what students write after tasks, AI can trace changes in their cultural attitudes over time and estimate how well value-oriented teaching goals are being met. It supports revision, but the final judgement in assessment shall stay with the teacher.

3.3.2. Specialized Assessment of Cross-Cultural Competence

Drawing on Byram's (1997) intercultural communication model and Huang's (2021) theory of cultural competence development, teachers and AI can assess the following dimensions.

Table 1. AI-based Evaluation Dimensions

Evaluation Dimension	Evaluation Content	Evaluation Method
Mastery of Cultural Knowledge	Understanding Chinese-Western cultural concepts, history, customary differences	AI-assisted quizzes, teacher Review
Cross-Cultural Practical Ability	Communicating in cross-cultural circumstances and solve cross-cultural problems	AI scenario simulation, performance assessment
Critical Awareness of Cultural Issues	Recognizing cultural stereotypes and explaining the roots of cultural differences from multiple perspectives	AI-supported bias identification and holistic teacher evaluation
Literacy in Human-AI Collaboration	Using AI to obtain varied cultural resources, improving outputs through iterative prompting, and assessing AI-generated content critically	Review of interaction records and evaluation of output quality
Cultural Competence Development / Awareness of Human-AI Symbiosis	Identifying shared values, examining AI's role in cross-cultural communication, and demonstrating inclusive and ethical approaches to human-AI collaboration in project proposals	Project-based learning assessment and final teacher review

Students who need stronger cross-cultural practical ability could be assigned simulated activities such as virtual business negotiations, whereas those who need to develop critical cultural awareness could receive resources centered on cases of media bias in China and the West.

4. Implementation Conditions for AI-assisted Chinese-Western Cultural Comparison Course

The three strategies presented in Section 3 provide a structure for AI-assisted Chinese-Western cultural comparison teaching. Their effectiveness, however, depends on pedagogical and ethical conditions rather than on the strategies alone.

4.1. Redefining Teacher Competence in AI-Assisted Environments

Teachers need digital competence, particularly the ability to engineer prompts effectively when generating cultural content. They should construct sound prompt logic and possess a certain contextual sensitivity. This requires teachers themselves to be academically rigorous and fairly knowledgeable, rather than remaining at a superficial level of basic digital literacy. For example, when comparing Chinese and Western concepts of "harmony", a good prompt would specify such dimensions as philosophical origins, social manifestations, and linguistic expressions, as well as the expected depth of analysis and the theoretical perspective to be adopted. This is a teachable skill that develops through deliberate practice and reflection.

Teachers' critical evaluative capacity is also crucial. AI-generated material may contain factual errors, cultural misrepresentation, or ideological bias that is not immediately visible. Teachers have to check outputs against authoritative sources, spot omissions and distortions, and place the material within the course's overall objectives. This is a continuous engagement with AI for rational evaluation.

Teachers also need the ability to adapt flexibly. As the course progresses, teachers must continuously adjust the tasks undertaken by AI, the teacher, and the students. Specifically, they need to judge which parts are suitable for AI to handle routine information retrieval and dialogue practice, which parts require the teacher to step in to provide expert interpretation and value guidance, and which parts should be left to the students so that they can discuss and negotiate cultural meaning among themselves. Such arrangements test not only teachers' grasp of the content but also their judgment and adaptability in classroom situations.

4.2. Negotiating Human-AI Boundaries and Mitigating Algorithmic Bias

4.2.1. Delineating Functional Boundaries

Effective practice requires an explicit allocation of responsibilities among teachers, students, and AI. Without it, teaching may swing between two undesirable extremes: one is excessive dependence on AI, and the other is a failure to use AI for tasks it can reasonably support. The table below lays out who does what in cultural comparison teaching across the whole teaching process.

Table 2. Teacher-Student-AI Responsibility Domain

Responsibility Domain	Primary Agent	Rationale
Core case selection and framing	Teacher	Requires curricular alignment, pedagogical judgment, and value orientation

Initial content generation and diversification	AI	Efficiency, scalability, and multimodal capacity
Content review, correction, and contextualization	Teacher	Professional expertise and cultural accuracy assurance
Dialogue simulation and language practice	AI	Provides low-risk, high-frequency interaction opportunities
Complex reasoning and ethical deliberation	Student	Develops independent critical thinking and cultural self-positioning
Performance assessment and qualitative feedback	Teacher & AI	AI provides data patterns and formative evidence; the teacher ensures contextual, ethical, and holistic judgment.
Data aggregation, pattern detection, and formative alerts	AI	Efficient processing of large-scale interaction logs

This allocation offers an initial basis on which teachers, students, and AI can define their respective roles. Students, in particular, need to understand these boundaries so that their expectations reflect both the reliability and the limitations of AI rather than unrealistic assumptions about its capabilities.

4.2.2. Addressing Cultural Bias in AI-Generated Content

Bias in AI-generated cultural content should not be treated as an isolated technical fault; it can arise from the composition of the data on which models are trained. Because Western perspectives are disproportionately represented in many large language models, the norms inferred by these models may privilege those perspectives. As a result, when making cultural comparisons, it tends to treat Western mainstream as self-evident reference, reading cultural differences as matters of superiority and inferiority. A course aimed at balanced intercultural understanding cannot accept AI output wholesale as neutral knowledge. Instead, it must lay these biases open in class and guide students to identify, question, and correct them.

Within the course, teachers should foster critical inquiry, safeguard academic accuracy and cultural appropriateness, and encourage students to scrutinize value assumptions from the standpoint of their own culture. The goal is not to eliminate bias entirely but to build students' capacity to recognize, analyze, and productively respond to it.

4.3. Contextual Conditions for Differentiated Task Design

Differentiated task design incorporates graduated forms of support into AI-assisted teaching, enabling students with different starting points to participate productively. This matters in Chinese-Western cultural comparison course because the student population is highly mixed: learners vary in their prior knowledge of Eastern and

Western traditions, in language proficiency, in cognitive preferences, and in how much intercultural experience they have had. A single task for everyone, with or without AI, tends to lose the weaker students and bore the stronger ones. Differentiation is consequently a prerequisite for implementing the strategies in Section 3, not merely an optional enhancement. The table below differentiates tasks along three dimensions in AI-assisted cultural comparison course:

Table 3. Task Dimension and AI-Assisted Implementation

Differentiation Dimension	AI-Assisted Implementation
Access to Knowledge	AI prepares reading materials at different levels according to students' prior knowledge.
Cognitive complexity	AI drafts tasks at varying depths for teachers to assign or students to self-select.
Mode of participation	AI supports diverse output formats, including written essays, AI-assisted oral presentations, multimedia projects, or simulated dialogues.

Teachers can put these differentiated tasks into practice through three low-cost steps that do not require specialized platforms. First, teachers can enter prepared prompts into widely available generative AI tools to produce level-specific readings or task sheets efficiently. Second, a transparent and unified rubric should be provided, allowing students to self-assess and choose their preferred task pathway. Third, teachers can assign students into mixed-ability groups and utilize shared cloud documents. This allows students with stronger AI skills to assist their peers, ensuring that everyone can access the technology fairly and collaborate effectively.

5. Conclusion

This paper has proposed a "goal-strategy-condition" framework for integrating AI into the Chinese-Western cultural comparison course. By translating the theories of Byram, Vygotsky, and Huang et al. into five interconnected course goals, the framework defines the course's pedagogical direction in the AI era and informs three strategies for content reconstruction, process design, and multidimensional assessment. Ultimately, it specifies four implementation conditions: teacher competence, human-AI boundary negotiation and bias mitigation, and differentiated task design that are essential for these strategies to work in practice. However, it remains conceptual and has not yet been tested in classrooms; it also depends on practical conditions such as teachers' time to review AI-generated content, students' willingness to question AI, and schools' permission to use generative AI in class. Future research should empirically test its effects on intercultural competence, critical cultural awareness, and AI literacy.

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