

## Research on the Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Competence of Minority College Students in English Teaching

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**Abstract:** In the context of economic globalization and "One Belt And One Road", cross-cultural communicative competence has become the demand of high-quality talents in the 21st century. However, minority college students are faced with multiple tasks of cultural identity and the way out for their English learning is also thought-provoking. This paper based on the characteristics of Minority College students, analyzes the current situation of minority college students' English learning and proposes effective ways to cultivate minority college students' intercultural communication ability from the perspective of teachers and students.

### 1. Introduction

With the continuous development of economic globalization and information network, globalization has become an irreversible trend and the cross-cultural communication ability has become a basic survival skill for people as citizens of the world. At the same time, communication, as the core of language learning, has also been put forward by the Department of Higher Education in the "College English Course Teaching Requirements" that cross-cultural communication must be included in the teaching arrangements of colleges and universities. However, minority college students have a weak foundation in English learning, and their awareness of intercultural communication is almost non-existent, which has become a huge obstacle to their English learning process. The changes of the times and the requirements of the courses themselves make it of great practical significance to cultivate the intercultural communication ability of minority college students in English teaching.

### 2. Connotation of intercultural communication and intercultural communication competence

The concept of "intercultural communication" was first used by the American cultural anthropologist Edward Hall and its connotation is interpreted through the proposition that "Culture is communication, communication is culture". Summerwa and Porter made a specific definition of "intercultural communication": "the communication between people with different cultural perception and symbol systems" (Summerwa, Porter, 2004). Therefore, intercultural communication refers to the process of communication between people with different cultural backgrounds. The cultural background refers to the long-term cultural accumulation of communicators, that is, the sum of stable value orientation, thinking mode and psychological structure of communicators.

American sociolinguist Hymes believes that "Intercultural communicative competence is the ability to use the target language for effective language communication, which mainly includes the ability to master the rules of language form and the social rules of language use" (Hymes, 1972). American intercultural education scholar Patrick R. Moran (Moran, 2001) pointed out in the further analysis of "competence" in cultural learning results that language level is an important foundation and intercultural communication competence is the core from language level to communicative competence and cultural competence, and then to intercultural communication competence. Professor Wen Qiufang (Wen Qiufang, 2004) put forward the most influential model of intercultural communication in the domestic linguistic circle. She divided intercultural communication competence into intercultural competence and communicative competence, among

which intercultural competence includes sensitivity and tolerance to cultural differences and flexibility in dealing with cultural differences. Communicative competence consists of language competence, pragmatic competence and flexibility.

Although the views of scholars are not the same, but most of them acknowledge the cross-cultural communicative competence in accurately, appropriately and effectively use English on the behavior of cross-cultural communication, thus making minority college students to understand cultural differences according to different communication occasions and communicate with reference to the appropriate cultural background is the focus of the minority college students' cross-cultural communication ability.

### **3. The particularity of minority college students' English learning**

For minority college students, although their English learning experience and language ability are different, overall speaking, they have poor English foundation, weak grammar skills, inaccurate oral pronunciation, low cross-cultural awareness and weak cross-cultural communication ability. Compared with han students, there are great differences in language, customs, religious beliefs, living habits, educational foundation and other aspects. The status quo of their English learning is affected by many factors and has its particularity.

#### **3.1. Multiculturalism**

Most minority students are faced with multiple tasks of cultural identity, such as the identification of traditional Chinese culture and other minority cultures, as well as the identification of western culture. Cultural differences lead to friction, thus hindering the smooth progress of intercultural communication. Although minority college students learn English knowledge, they apply their own national thinking mode due to regional characteristics and their own cultural customs, so there are often pragmatic errors in intercultural communication.

#### **3.2. The age of English beginners are slightly older**

Minority college students have mastered their mother tongue and Chinese as a second language before learning English, so for most minority college students, learning English belongs to trilingual acquisition, which needs to be carried out alternately with the help of their mother tongue and Chinese. However, Lv Wanying and Luo Hong (2012) found that the age of minority English beginners was relatively older, and the average age of the respondents was 12.5 years old. According to the critical period hypothesis, the best age to learn a language is before the age of 10, so for most minority college students, English learning is challenging.

#### **3.3. Lack of English learning environment**

Most ethnic minority areas are in remote areas of China, economic development is relatively backward, the level of foreign language education is relatively low and English teaching method is still given priority to the grammar translation method, vocabulary teaching method. They pay too much attention to language form and ignore the use of language in actual communication occasions, which inevitably lead to "deaf and dumb English". Although years of English learning has enabled minority college students to accumulate and improve their English reading and writing ability to a certain extent, and some students can even pass CET-4, overall speaking their listening and speaking ability is still very poor.

### **4. Cultivate the intercultural communication ability of minority college students**

Under the situation of cross-cultural communication, as the important carrier of cross-cultural communication, minority college students must have a certain cultural knowledge, diversified perspectives and effective communication skills, and the cultivation of intercultural communication ability should be interpreted from perspectives of teachers and students:

## **4.1. Teacher's perspective**

### **4.1.1. Change their original teaching concept**

The main purpose of college English teaching should be given priority to listening and speaking, weaken the teaching of grammar and vocabulary, and apply what is learned in class in communication. So during the teaching process teachers should use a variety of teaching methods together and enable students to participate in class and enjoy class to a great extent, changing cramming English classroom into a place for language learning and changing passive teaching into active teaching. At the same time, teachers should actively interact with the students and improve students' oral English ability in the process of communicative teaching, so that the teachers become the organizers and guiders of the language learning, making students truly become the main part and focus of the classroom.

### **4.1.2. Improve the professional quality of teachers**

Teachers are more demonstrators of cultural learning than instructors of cultural teaching, they are the guiders in the process of students' English learning. Teachers' teaching level directly determines the quality of English teaching, so during the specific teaching process, teachers should actively introduce foreign culture to all students, but should not be simply acted as "mouthpiece", instead they should have their own thoughts and opinions, so teachers should pay attention to improve their professional quality, update their own cultural knowledge with continuous efforts so as to improve their own intercultural communication competence.

### **4.1.3. Improve teaching methods**

For a long time, traditional English teaching pays more attention to the transmission of language knowledge and ignores the cultivation of intercultural communication, so it is imperative to improve teaching methods. In general, the following teaching methods can be used for reference:

First, comparative teaching. Intercultural communication is communication between people from different cultural backgrounds, therefore in the concrete teaching process teachers can make full use of the fact that students have mastered knowledge of their culture so that they can compare them with corresponding foreign cultural knowledge teaching, enhancing their intercultural sensitivity, making the minority college students smoothly carry through cross-cultural communication.

Second, situational teaching. Learning any language is inseparable from a certain language environment, and influence of the language environment has an immeasurable effect on the improvement of people's language ability. According to w. Littlewoods, "Communicative language teaching makes us more strongly aware that it is not enough to teach students to master foreign language structures; learners must master strategies to apply these structures to communicative functions in real environments". Therefore, in the intercultural communication teaching practice, teachers should create more real language context and situational context for students, so that students can learn language and cultural knowledge in meaningful communication activities so as to immerse them in the cultural learning atmosphere of the target language and ensure the smooth completion of intercultural communication teaching.

Third, multimedia teaching. Minority college students have no personal experience of British and American culture, and it is difficult to achieve the teaching purpose only by reading written materials or explaining abstract concepts. With the rapid development of multimedia technology, multimedia teaching plays a very important role in English teaching. By means of multimedia, students can initially feel the foreign culture and understand its real connotation.

## **4.2. Student perspective**

### **4.2.1. Acculturation psychology**

Minority college students who grew up in the relatively enclosed environment, highly agree with their national culture with solid cultural barriers and have a psychological rejection to foreign culture and even lead to culture shock, so respect and tolerance for different cultures is the premise

of cultivating ethnic minority college students' cross-cultural communication ability. Therefore, English teachers should not only pay attention to the main ethnic culture, but also take into account the minority culture, and constantly infiltrate the national culture of English-speaking countries, improve the minority college students' sense of identity for English education, and effectively cultivate the minority college students' awareness of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural coexistence.

#### **4.2.2. Correct learning attitude**

Byram believes that attitude is a prerequisite for success in cross-cultural communication. To clarify the importance of intercultural communication ability, correct learning attitude is the premise of cultivating intercultural communication ability of minority college students. Minority college students, on the other hand, have a weak English foundation, relatively weak ability to use English language, low understanding of foreign culture and history, and narrow scope of knowledge, leading to inferiority complex in cross-cultural communication. As a teacher, they should help them find commonalities in different cultural backgrounds and understand the national culture deeply from different cultural perspective, motivate their enthusiasm to participate in cross-cultural communication and gradually increase self-confidence.

#### **4.2.3. Enhance learning interest**

Language learning is a rather boring learning process that needs to be repeated constantly. It is not only necessary to memorize a large number of words, sentence patterns and grammar, but also to be familiar with the cultural background of the local language and country. Interest is the best teacher. If the minority students are interested in the background of English culture, they will spontaneously seek to understand the differences between the cross-cultural background and the national cultural background, so as to stimulate the learning of customs, traditions and outlook on life. Therefore, teachers can flexibly use a variety of teaching methods, optimize the teaching design, stimulate students' interest in learning English to a greatest extent.

### **5. Conclusion**

It is an important task for college English teaching to cultivate the intercultural communicative competence of minority college students. However, the teaching of intercultural communication competence for minority college students is relatively complicated because they are faced with many cultural factors, the older age of English beginners and the lack of English learning environment. Teachers should make students obtain both knowledge and the emotional support in English teaching, not only improve the minority students' cultural adaptability, confidence and interest in English learning, but also permeate cross-cultural knowledge in the classroom, correctly handle the cross-cultural communication barriers, using effective teaching methods to cultivate the students' cross-cultural awareness and improve the ability of intercultural communication, so as to create a high level of intercultural communication talents of ethnic minorities for the society.

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