

# Principles and Strategies for Improving Intercultural Communication Competence of Senior High School English Students Under the Guidance of Core Competence

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## **Abstract**

Cultivating students' intercultural communication competence conforms to the requirement of cultivating their core competence in terms of the New English curriculum standard for senior high school. This paper aims to analyze the principles and propose some effective strategies for improving the intercultural communication competence of students in senior high school on the basis of status quo analysis. The study renders that there are several principles that English teachers can follow in order to cultivate students' intercultural communication competence: practical principle, authentic principle, progressive principle, ideological principle and principle of equality. And the study also probes into the strategies in macro and micro perspectives with the hope of improving students' intercultural communication competence, the strategies containing updating teaching methods; designing teaching plans effectively directed to core competence; encouraging deep learning; comparing different language characteristics; learning about the thinking patterns of other cultural groups and so on.

## **Keywords**

**Intercultural communication competence; Strategies; Principles; Core competence**

## **Cite This Article**

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## Introduction

Intercultural communication involves a progress in which people communicate with others with different culture. Accordingly, intercultural communication competence refers to the ability of individual to communicate with the people with different cultural identity and it is considered as a kind of competence to interact, comprehend and communicate among diverse cultures from one's own cultural background. As for its competence, on the one hand, intercultural communication is widely involved in the diplomacy, international trade, tourism, cooperation and other aspects nowadays. Students are the future of each country and their capability directly influences the development of this country, thus the study of cultivation the intercultural communication competence of students has unique significance in improving their core competence, removing cultural stereotypes and ethnocentrism, and understanding and embracing cultural diversity. On the other hand, one of the prerequisites for the success of foreign language learning is the mastery of cultural knowledge behind the target language. Only with the knowledge of cultural background can a foreign language learner successfully communicate with others and enhance his in-depth understanding of the target language(Zhang Yan 2022)

## Literature review

Foreign scholars have long noticed the field of cross-cultural research, and the research on intercultural communication competence has been relatively perfect. Hall(1959) is the pioneer in the field of intercultural study. He thought that human being are under the influence of the culture and in return pose great influence on the culture; Lado(1957) consistently believed that the teaching of culture affiliates to foreign language teaching, and he held that one can not learn a foreign language if he is ignorant of or lack of deeper understanding of the cultural background behind the language; Starosta(1997)concluded, criticized and redefined that sensitivity and awareness of intercultural communication; Claire(2000) also believed that both the core and form of a language are influenced and even determined by its culture and one is unable to really understand this language if he does not master its cultural core.

Domestic studies of this field, though compared with foreign research, start relatively late, the promotion of international status and discourse power requires more high-quality talents with strong international communication competence., which forces domestic scholars to be aware of the importance of cultivationof thies kind of ability inn the English language teaching. Hu Wenzhong interpreted the relationship between culture and language teaching and he thought that there should be contrastive study of language and culture between English and Chinese(Wang Xiuyu 2022). In addition, lots of document literature have been emerged these years about language teaching and improving international communication competence. For instance, Meng Haohao(2022) explored the necessity and status quo of

cultivation of intercultural communication competence in senior high school English teaching, followed by his analysis of corresponding measures that English teachers can adopt; Jiang Yongyuan(2023) talked about the strategies about how teachers can cultivate students' intercultural communication competence and awareness in junior high school under the new curricular standards; Wang Chengxin and Deng Yanjun(2022) tried to construct the model of intercultural communication competence based on theory with Chinese characteristics; Li Hua(2022) also emphasized the significance of intercultural communication competence in junior high school, demonstrated the remarkable advantages of intercultural communication competence teaching based on the English core competence.

It can be seen that the research on intercultural communication has been widely concerned by scholars at home and abroad, but the related literature about the intercultural communication competence under the guidance of English core competence is not really enough. Hence, This thesis tries to analyze the principles and search some effective strategies to improve intercultural communication competence of senior high school students from macro and micro perspectives. Strategies from macro perspective contain updating teaching methods, designing teaching plans effectively directed to core competence, utilizing other resources to enrich students cultural horizon; Strategies from micro perspective include learning about cultural differences through comparing different language characteristics, and learning about the thinking patterns of other cultural groups.

## **Intercultural communication competence and core competence**

Intercultural communication competence is an important part of core competence of senior high school students. Cultivating students' intercultural communication competence is not only beneficial to improve the core competence of high school students, bur also contributes to better cross-cultural communication and comprehension of them.The English new curriculum standard for senior high school puts forward four dimensions of English subject core accomplishment, one of which is cultural awareness. Cultural awareness refers to the understanding of culture at home and abroad and identity of splendid culture, and students intercultural cognition, attitude and conducts in the context of globalization. In the English language teaching,culture refers to the historical geography, customs, traditional customs, lifestyle, literature and art, code of conduct, values and so on of the country where the language is spoken. To cultivate students' cultural awareness is to enable learners to have an overall understanding of the social culture of the target language, have a full and correct understanding of cultural phenomena and customs that are different from their own national culture, and gradually accept and adapt to them. Therefore, contacting with and understanding the different cultures of English-speaking countries is conducive to learners' understanding and use of English, to deepening their understanding and knowledge of our own culture, and to cultivating and improve our cross-cultural communication ability as well.

## **The status quo analysis**

Although intercultural communication competence is very important for the cultivation of students' core qualities and international communication, it has to be admitted that although the new curriculum standards have been proposed for several years, most high school students still lack the understanding of relevant cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries, and their level of intercultural communication is still low. Simply speaking, this reveals the fact that the cultivation of core competence proposed in English new curriculum standard has not been well implemented in many senior high schools. There are many complex factors contributing to the result. For example, many students are heavily influenced by their native language culture, and due to lack of cultural context of target language, students' intercultural awareness is also inhibited. What is more, some English teachers still stick to traditional teaching model and methods, paying more attention to the language knowledge points in order to higher grades that students can get in college entrance exam. Even though some teachers acknowledge the importance of intercultural communication competence and indeed do some cultural transmission in the class, they do not put in an important position from beginning to end the cultivation of students' intercultural communication competence (Li Chuan & Wang Jin 2018). In addition that, some English lack the ability and be in low level of intercultural communication so that they can not find out the cultural elements from textbook and have no idea how to utilize other teaching resources to impart different cultures.

## Principles

In English language teaching, the teacher would better abide by some principles in order to develop students intercultural communication competence more successfully. This paper proposes these following principles: practical principle, authentic principle, progressive principle, ideological principle and principle of equality.

### Practical principle

Culture of different countries and groups is complex and its content is also very large. Students can not learn about all the cultural content of different countries with limited time and energy. Practical principle refers that English teachers need to learn about which cultural differences have relatively greater influence on people's communication because the failure to master these cultural differences may heavily cause the failure of intercultural communication. Therefore, in the process of cultivating students' intercultural communication ability, teachers need to dig deep into the cultural elements in teaching materials and various counseling materials. English teachers should not only pay attention to the introduction of some commonsense cultures, which may be realized early by students themselves, but also pay more attention to students' understanding of important cultural differences, especially the parts with great cultural differences, such as communication rules and behavior habits because these parts inevitably have a great impact on students' understanding of other cultures and their ability in the actual intercultural communication. This is also a challenge for teachers because teacher must first learn about the important

and practical differences of culture and then impart the cultural difference to students in English class.

### **Authentic principle**

Due to the lack of corresponding cultural environment, students tend to be ignorant of the cultural differences. Thus, English teachers need try their best to create the context so that students can be exposed to the cultural distinctions. In English Classroom teaching, teachers ought to obey the authentic principle in order to improve students intercultural communication competence more efficiently. Teachers should try their best to create a authentic cultural environment and give students the opportunity to feel personally involved. For instance, teachers can use some teaching aids , such as multimedia video screening, or provide students with foreign articles related to cultural differences for students to enjoy and understand. Only in authentic context can students comprehend faster and more accurately the cultural differences and improve their intercultural communication competence. This principle and practical principle discussed above require teachers themselves to be proficient in the cultural differences between English and Chinese, which is also the prerequisite for teachers to achieve their teaching objectives of enhancing students' cultural awareness according to the core competence.

### **Progressive principle**

Students' language ability develops according to the cognitive law. The teaching materials currently in use are also written in a spiral and step-by-step manner according to this law. The cultivation of intercultural communication competence also be in accordance with this law. Due to the lack of foreign language cultural context, students are influenced easily by their mother tongue culture in the process of learning English, which usually generate cultural shock and conflict. Brown once divided the stages of acculturation during second language acquisition into four stages: students feel excited when initially exposed to different culture, followed by cultural shock stage in which they feel alienated and resist to the target language culture and then enter into the stage of cultural adaptation. So it can be seen that students' understanding different cultures is a progressive principle. Therefore, in the process of teaching, English teachers should follow this rule, combine the content of teaching materials and different language functions, and carry the infiltration in different contexts from easy to difficult, from one to multiple. Teachers are not supposed to think that this is a short-term process. On the contrary , the cultivation of intercultural communication competence needs the constant efforts of teachers and students.

### **Ideological principle**

When letting students understand different culture, teachers need to play a guiding role because not all foreign culture is beneficial. Moreover, in today's society, the phenomenon of cultural penetration and cultural invasion is a severe social problem that can not be ignored, coupled with developed network technology and multiple channels of information acquisition, which may cause some physical and mental

problems of students. Therefore, teachers must pay attention to the grasp of ideological principle when introducing relevant cultural background knowledge to students. In the aspect of selecting extracurricular reading materials, teachers need to guide students to choose those books or articles with positive content and teach students make correct judgement consciously so that students can build correct values and learn to deal with the relationship between native language culture and foreign language culture. This principle along with progressive principle needs persistence of teachers.

### **Principle of equality**

Upholding the national character of culture and the diversity of world cultures is the eternal theme of the development of human civilization. There is no noble and humble culture. Therefore, teachers need to guide students to respect differences, understand individuality, coexist peacefully in cultural exchanges, jointly promote the prosperity of world culture, and oppose the wrong tendency of blindly arrogating, belittling, rejecting, or belittling and blindly worships different cultures. Teachers should teach students to adhere to the principle of equality in dealing with different cultural issues, maintain a modest attitude, while inheriting the excellent traditional Chinese culture, actively learn from foreign excellent culture, eliminate cultural stereotypes, and oppose to treat foreign culture with colored glasses. Only on the basis of understanding and respecting different cultural differences can students carry out intercultural communication smoothly and improve their intercultural communication competence.

### **Strategies**

In traditional English teaching, there is a common phenomenon that students can not understand the purpose or connotation of the passage despite the fact that there is no strange or new words or phrases, causing some mistakes or wrong answers to the given questions. What is more, most students may make some mistakes and pose cause an awkward situation when they communicate with foreigners though these students have excellent listening and speaking skills. With other environmental factors excluded, a big part of it is because that most students lack of knowledge of cultural practices in other countries. Thus, it is necessary to help students learn more about different culture so that they can perform better in English learning and intercultural communication.

#### **Strategies in macro perspective**

##### *Updating and utilizing teaching methods more flexibly*

It can not be denied that traditional or single teaching methods are difficult to meet the needs of the cultivation of students' intercultural communication competence. Traditional methods usually direct to language knowledge, such as the memorizing of vocabularies or the grasp of grammar rules, which is scarcely linked to the requirements of developing students' core competence. Single methods are also targeted at particular skill, which may cut the connection of language skills and disobey the demand of

multi-skill integration development. Thus, teachers would better update teaching methods and use these methods more flexibly. Teacher must bear in mind that all adoption of these methods aims to the achievement of teaching objectives. For instance, the reading part, in Unit4 Body Language in FLTRP senior English compulsory book1, mainly discusses the embarrassing scenes due to differences of body language of different countries. Body language in different nations or countries has different connotation and it contains face expression, gesture, sitting position and eye contact and so on. Take eye contact as an example. In some countries, staring directly at each other during face-to-face communication is regarded as provocative behaviour, while in other countries, it is regarded as a basic etiquette of dialogue and communication to show respect. So in this class, teachers should guide students perceive and apply body language correctly in intercultural communication (Jiang Yongyuan 2023). In the class, teachers can adopt situational teaching method combined with role play activity, which allows students practice and experience cultural differences in created situation in different identity. Situational teaching method not only emphasize the cultivation of student's speaking and listening skill, but also attach importance to their viewing ability, which allows students adapt their behaviour in different communicative situation. That teachers adopt situational teaching method can not only liven up the classroom atmosphere, but also intensify students' sensitivity to cultural differences, which can help to improve students' intercultural communication competence (Li Hui 2022).

#### *Designing teaching plans effectively directed to core competence*

Cultivation students' core accomplishment means cultivating students' cultural consciousness, which is beneficial to develop students' intercultural communication competence. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to design teaching plans effectively which are directed to students' core competence. This means that teachers should follow the English new curriculum standard and aim to develop students core competence in different types of courses. Each type of course can be properly designed to generally achieve this goal, but this process a progressive. Here is given an example: the title of selected article is "**A Game for the World**" from Unit3 On the Move in FLTRP senior English compulsory book2. The thematic context of this article is about man and society. This is an argumentation demonstrations that why the football is so popular around the world. Here is the example directed to core competence as Table 1:

<b>Table1:Teaching procedures</b>			
Steps	Teacher	Students(Ss for short)	Purposes
Lead in	design a guessing activity; give Ss some hints by describing the details of the sports	Ss can guess the sport——football	arouse Ss' interest and draw their attention
Pre-reading	ask Ss if they know the rules to play football	talk about the rules to play football	stimulate Ss' background information and schema and arouse students' interest in reading
	ask Ss the history of football and lead them to	discuss the history of this sport and check their guessing by	

	check their answer	following reading	
While-reading	ask Ss to read the article quickly and divide the article into several parts and conclude the main content of each part	read the article quickly and divide the article into several parts and conclude the main content of each part	learn about the main content of each paragraph; improve their generalization ability and learn about the main structure of the whole passage; enhance Ss' comprehension of this article and improve students capability of analysis and ability to utilize detailed information to support their idea. form a general image about this article
	give some questions according to each part and interpret some new words at the same time	answer the questions by reading the article more carefully and learn the use of new words	
	ask students to draw the map of this article in a white paper after the analysis of the whole passage	draw the map of this article in a white paper after learning the whole passage	
Post-reading	based on the popularity of football as a sport of the world , ask Ss to tell some famous football countries in group	discuss in group and think about the football countries: Argentina; Brazil; Germany and so on	learn about the football culture of other countries, learn about the status quo of football in our country, improve students initiative and problem solving ability and cooperative ability.
	Compare the number of football fans in these countries with that in China from given graphs	draw a conclusion from these graphs	
	ask Ss to make a post to call on the nation to play football together in group. The post can include the benefits of playing football that provided in preceding map	make a post to call on the nation to play football together. Ss can add more advantages to enrich their posters in group	
Summarizing and	Ask Ss sum up what they have learned with	sum up what they have learned with the help of the post and	consolidate what Ss have learned



assessment	the help of the post and map and given the assessment	map and assess themselves	
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From this teaching plan, teacher provide an opportunity for students to learn about the history of football and the reasons why the game is for the world, which can create a link between a familiar sport and foreign countries sport culture; Moreover, these activities designed in this teaching plan can develop students core competence by improving their different level ability: analytical ability, inductive ability, hands-on ability, creativity, problem-solving ability and so on. In addition, the post-reading part can be used to help the improvement of students' cultural horizon and awareness, which is conducive to cultivating their intercultural communication competence.

#### *Utilizing other resources to enrich students cultural horizon*

The rapid development of modern network technology and communication technology provides an important platform for teachers and students to understand the culture of other countries. In addition to making good use of books and textbooks to dig out cultural differences, English teachers should also learn to use other network resources or platforms to enrich classroom content and strengthen students' understanding of other cultures. The combination of textbook content and network resources can supplement the textbook content and deepen students' impression and understanding of different cultures. In this process, teachers also need to screen and organize network resources in order to better integrate them into teaching. In addition, teachers can also use video, audio and other resources to create scenes, so that students can practice cross-cultural communication on the basis of understanding different cultures, and cultivate students' cross-cultural communication ability. In addition, teachers should encourage students to learn to use the Internet platform, actively participate in extracurricular cultural activities, and strengthen the sense of identity and belonging to the excellent traditional Chinese culture while learning from and absorbing other excellent cultures.

#### *Creating cultural environment*

English is the carrier of language and culture, and its formation and expression are closely related to the living habits, customs and values of people in English-speaking countries. As a language, English learning has a strong dependence on the environment. In order to improve the cross-cultural communication ability and cultivate the core quality of students, students need to be exposed to the English cultural environment. However, due to the limited conditions, high school students have fewer opportunities to go abroad to learn about foreign cultures, so teachers need to build a good English cultural environment for students. The English cultural environment in school includes classroom environment and campus environment. School classrooms can use the campus radio station to introduce articles and speeches about different foreign cultures to students during the break time, and can also set up English corners and English parks to create an English exchange environment for students. Teachers can also

arrange activities to appreciate English classics or literary works, so that students can understand foreign cultures and values from the active exploration of foreign literary works. Students are encouraged to use the Internet platform to consult relevant literature, compare the cultural differences between China and the west, and strengthen the understanding of the cultural differences between China and the West, so as to help students improve their intercultural communication competence. In addition, English cultural environment also includes social and family environment. Education-related workers can give full play to the positive role of mass media to build a better English culture learning environment for students. And schools can also cooperate with other social organization so that students have access to communication with foreigners.

### *Encouraging deep learning*

Deep learning means that students need to dig and probe into the learning materials, not just learn the surface language basics. If students only learn some knowledge points and understanding the meaning of the text, they can not promote their learning capability and thinking level, as well as their cultural horizon. English teachers need to encourage students to do deep learning so that they can explore the cultural value behind the text on the basis of mastering the surface knowledge and understanding of the meaning of the text, so as to improve the understanding and grasp of the connotation of the text. Through the understanding of the connotation of different learning materials, students can have a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the culture, traditions and customs of English-speaking countries, which can subtly influence students' communicative behaviors in the face of different cultures, so as to improve their intercultural communicative competence.

### **Strategies in micro perspective**

#### *Comparing language characteristics between different culture groups*

Language reflects culture. Different countries have their own languages due to different historical development. The communication mode formed under such special cultural background reflects the social customs and values of local people, which also makes the difference between Chinese and Western languages the most important factor affecting intercultural communication (Gong Jinpei 2022). For example, at the phonetic level, Chinese language has rich intonation, and different intonations can be read with certain rules, giving people the feeling of cadence, while Western languages emphasize closed syllables, open syllables, and the division of polysyllables and monosyllables. In the aspect of vocabulary, taking the English and Chinese kinship terms as an example, the Chinese “爷爷” and “奶奶” can be translated into the English grandfather and grandmother, but the conceptual understanding of grandfather and grandmother is “the father/mother of your father or mother.” In other words, grandfather/grandmother can also refer to 外公/外婆. It can be seen that Chinese distinguishes relatives or relatives' appellations more carefully and strictly than English. This is because that the distinction between China and British. The ancient Chinese

clan period strictly distinguished clan from non-clan and various relationships such as elder and younger, while English often classified family members according to their seniority rather than blood relationship. As for the grammatical structure or syntactic rule, the grammatical categories of English nouns include number, sex and case, and verbs include tenses, states and bodies, but Chinese rarely make such distinctions. Influenced by Chinese traditional philosophy, Chinese speakers emphasize “enlightenment” in the way of thinking, which is a kind of paratactic language. Therefore, Chinese expression is usually implicit and introspective, focusing on semantics, and often expressing the logical relationship between sentences in a recessive way. The different natural geographical environment and the resulting commercial and Marine culture in the West have prompted them to form a thinking mode different from that of the Han nationality. One of the basic characteristics of their traditional philosophy is rationalism, which is reflected in their language, which pays attention to the completeness of formal logic, so their language expression has more stringent requirements on formal structure. English often uses various means of connection or explicit symbolic representation to ensure the complete, accurate and logical expression of meaning.

#### *Learning about different thinking patterns*

Different patterns of thinking also reflect the culture and values of different groups to some extent. A common phenomenon in the classroom is that when Chinese students write in English, they are very different from native English speakers. Here are two examples of composition selected respectively from TECCT and NESSIEv1 as **Table2**:

**Table2**

**Example2:** Living off campus is a choice I think every student should have. I need my personal space for studying...Dorm rooms are often cramped and noisy which is not conducive to studying. Off-campus apartments provide this privacy and gives college students a more realistic idea... There will be multiple bills to pay at certain times, cleaning...This is a time where students should study all aspects of becoming an adult, including cooking...as well as tidying up after dinner are great habits to become accustomed to in this transitory period...plenty of time to hone other skills that you will need upon entering the working force.

**Example1:** I am a seventeen-year-old girl now, so from birth to today, I have experienced various things. In my opinion, I don't have the most unforgotten day, because I have too many unforgotten memories, so I would pick one of them to talk with you. Before some days, on November 24th was my birthday. It was on Monday and I went to school earlier than any day.....After class, I caught a piece of cake for classmates to eat. I made a wish, and .....I felt very fortunate. It was obviously, we had a wonderful time that I wouldn't forgotten the time forever.

**Example 1** is an sample of Chinese students, example 2 English native speaker. From example1, we can observe the Chinese students' thinking on information construction and text organization in English writing -- from far to near, and gradually from roundabout: when describing the most memorable day, the

student first explains a series of events that are not strongly related to the topic. The whole essay moves from far to near, interspersed with a series of details, and finally suggests that this is the student's most memorable experience. Native English speakers, on the other hand, often begin by explaining the topic of the discussion or expressing the point of view, followed by a series of detailed analysis. **Example 2** shows that native English speakers begin by pointing out their own views and the theme of the discussion, that is, "living off campus" should be everyone's choice, and then proceed to a detailed analysis of the pros and cons of living on campus and the advantages of living off campus.

The different thinking patterns of English and Chinese speakers are related to their different cultural environments: since ancient times, China has emphasized the unity of heaven and man and the complementary of Yin and Yang. Confucianism has influenced generation after generation of Chinese people, forming a comprehensive, holistic, fuzzy and unique internal thinking mode of Chinese speakers. While Western traditional philosophy advocates the dichotomy of God and earth, the separation of subject and object, and the opposition of soul and body, Westerners pay more attention to the analytical cognition of the objective world and like to solve problems in an analytical, logical and objective way of thinking.

## Conclusion

To broaden senior high school students' cultural horizons, let them understand different cultures and broaden their intercultural thinking, intercultural communication competence is an important aspect of students' core competence, and English classroom teaching is a very important way to improve students' intercultural communication competence. Therefore, teachers should adopt various effective strategies as far as possible to impart the required knowledge and at the same time and to improve students' intercultural communication skills effectively. In this process, teachers need to pay attention to the fact that the cultivation of intercultural communication ability is a gradual process, which cannot be accomplished overnight, so teachers and students need to adhere to it for a long time, and teachers should pay attention to creating a real cultural environment and following the practical and thoughtful principles. Meanwhile, teachers should make comprehensive use of various effective teaching methods or means to cultivate students' sensitivity to cultural differences. Tolerance, the flexibility to deal with cultural differences and the adaptability to communication patterns, so as to broaden students' cross-cultural thinking and improve students' intercultural communication competence. The paper briefly analyze the status quo of intercultural communication competence of senior high school students and further explore and introduce several principles and strategies of cultivating students' intercultural communication competence. In the future study, scholars can explore approaches to intercultural communication competence of students from other perspectives, such as social perspective and family perspective.

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