

Exploring Strategies for Cultivating Intercultural Awareness among English Majors

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Abstract

The author of this paper has researched the current situation of the cultivation of intercultural awareness among English majors in the light of the national policy and social demand, and puts forward a multidimensional cultivation strategy for the problems existing in the process of the cultivation of intercultural awareness among English majors, i.e., clarifying the cultivation objectives and formulating a practicable teaching plan, improving the comprehensive quality of the teachers, enhancing the intercultural practice and updating the intercultural teaching contents in the textbooks. The author expects to provide some reference for improving English majors' intercultural awareness and competence.

Keywords

English Majors; Intercultural Awareness; Cultivation Strategies.

1. Introduction

In the surging wave of globalization, every corner of the world is closely connected, forming an unprecedented network of cross-cultural communication. In this network, English, as the universal language of international communication, has become more and more prominent in its status and role. With the acceleration of global integration, English is not only a tool for communication, but also a bridge connecting different cultures and ideas. In the context of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become a key link to enhance understanding and promote cooperation among countries. Through the common language of English, we can gain a deeper understanding of the history, culture and values of other countries, thus breaking down barriers and promoting harmonious coexistence. At the same time, this also puts forward higher requirements for our English majors. They should not only master a solid language foundation, but also have a profound cross-cultural awareness and ability to cope with the increasingly complex international environment.

At present, the cultivation of intercultural awareness of our English majors is facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, the in-depth development of globalization has made cross-cultural exchanges more and more frequent, which puts forward higher requirements on the cross-cultural awareness and ability of English majors. They need to have keen cross-cultural insight and be able to accurately understand and grasp the information and intentions in different cultural contexts; at the same time, they also need to have flexible cross-cultural communication skills and be able to communicate and exchange effectively in different cultural contexts. On the other hand, the national policy attaches great importance to cultural education and opening up to the outside world, which provides strong support for the cultivation of English majors' intercultural awareness. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) clearly pointed out that it is necessary to "promote cultural self-confidence and self-reliance, and create a new splendor of socialist

culture". This policy orientation points out the direction for the cultivation of intercultural awareness of English majors and provides us with strong spiritual motivation.

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that "Cultural confidence represents a fundamental and profound force that sustains the development of a country and a nation." This assertion profoundly reveals the importance of cultural confidence for national development. In cross-cultural communication, cultural self-confidence is not only the cornerstone for us to hold on to our cultural roots and pass on our cultural essence, but also the prerequisite for us to have equal dialogues, exchanges and mutual learning with other cultures. Therefore, to cultivate English majors' cross-cultural awareness is to let them deeply realize the unique charm and value of Chinese culture, so that they can show the elegance of Chinese culture more confidently on the stage of globalization. The National Standards for the Quality of Foreign Language and Literature Teaching in Higher Education Institutions (2019) , as an important document guiding the teaching of foreign languages and literatures in colleges and universities, clearly stipulates that the curricula of colleges and universities should emphasize the cultivation of competence and the construction of professional knowledge, and in particular the cultivation of the ability of thinking, innovation and cross-cultural competence. This provision provides a clear guiding direction for us to cultivate English majors' intercultural awareness. In the process of cultivating English majors, we should pay attention to cultivating students' cross-cultural awareness, so that they can understand the backgrounds, characteristics and differences of different cultures, learn to respect and understand different cultures, and thus display the elegance of Chinese culture more confidently on the stage of globalization.

2. The Necessity of Cultivating Intercultural Awareness for English Majors

Intercultural awareness refers to an individual's sensitivity to the similarities and differences between a foreign culture and his or her own culture, which requires an individual to be able to combine his or her own linguistic and cultural knowledge when applying a foreign language, to strengthen his or her understanding of the foreign language, and to make the output of the language more dynamic, flexible and self-conscious. The cultivation of cross-cultural awareness refers to the individual's deep understanding and awareness of the differences, conflicts and integration between different cultures in the context of globalization, and the gradual formation of a conscious cultural sensitivity and adaptability through learning and practice. For English majors, it is far from enough to master only the knowledge of English language itself, and it becomes especially important to cultivate cross-cultural awareness.

First of all, it enables students to dig deeper into the cultural heritage of the English language and understand the cultural connotations behind it. This in-depth understanding helps students express themselves more precisely in language use, thus effectively avoiding misunderstandings or conflicts in cross-cultural communication. This not only enhances students' language skills, but also strengthens their self-confidence and communicative competence. Secondly, in the context of increasing globalization, intercultural communication ability has become a crucial ability. Students with intercultural awareness are better able to adapt to different cultural environments and communicate effectively with people from different backgrounds. This ability not only helps them present themselves better on the international stage, but also enhances their international vision and competitiveness, laying a solid foundation for their future career development.

Therefore, we should attach great importance to the cultivation of intercultural awareness among English majors and provide them with more opportunities and practice platforms for intercultural communication. Only in this way can we cultivate outstanding talents with an international outlook and intercultural communication skills to contribute to the future development of globalization. At present, there is a growing demand for cross-cultural talents

in China, especially in the context of globalization and economic integration, enterprises need talents with international vision and cross-cultural communication skills to cope with the challenges and opportunities in the international market. These talents need to have foreign language ability, cross-cultural communication skills and global vision. The cultivation of cross-cultural awareness for English majors can effectively avoid misunderstandings, prejudices and conflicts arising from the lack of cultural understanding in cross-cultural communication. Such cultivation can enable students to perceive the differences between different cultures more keenly and improve their cross-cultural communication skills, so as to express themselves more confidently on the international stage, reduce the cultural gap, and promote the harmonious coexistence and communication between different cultures.

3. The Current Situation of Intercultural Awareness Cultivation for English Majors

In recent years, the cultivation of intercultural awareness among English majors has made remarkable progress, an achievement that is inseparable from the great importance the state attaches to and continuous investment in English major education. According to the National Standards for the Quality of Foreign Language and Literature Teaching in Higher Education Institutions (2019), English majors have been given higher expectations, requiring them to possess not only solid language skills, but also critical thinking ability, innovation ability and intercultural competence literacy. In order to meet this requirement, many colleges and universities have carried out drastic reforms in their English major programs. They have added courses related to cross-cultural communication, such as "Overview of English-speaking Countries", aiming at guiding students to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural backgrounds, social customs and values of different countries. These courses not only enrich the teaching content, but also provide students with more opportunities to understand the world and know themselves. With the rise of intercultural communication, many colleges and universities have further added specialized courses such as "Intercultural Communication". These courses not only focus on the teaching of theoretical knowledge, but also emphasize the cultivation of practical ability. Through case study, role play, group discussion and other forms, students can simulate real cross-cultural communication scenarios in the classroom and learn how to communicate effectively in different cultural contexts. In addition to classroom teaching, the school also actively creates practical opportunities for students. They organize students to participate in various international exchange programs, such as study abroad and student exchange programs, so that students can experience different cultures in an overseas environment. This kind of hands-on experience enables students to gain a deeper understanding of the differences and commonalities between different cultures, and to cultivate their cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural communication skills.

These initiatives not only enhance English majors' global vision and intercultural communication skills, but also lay a solid foundation for their future career development. In today's era of globalization, talents with intercultural awareness are increasingly favored by the society. Therefore, the cultivation of intercultural awareness among English majors has important practical significance and far-reaching historical significance. However, in the process of cultivating English majors, the cultivation of intercultural awareness faces a series of challenges and dilemmas, both at the level of knowledge input and at the level of practical application. These challenges and dilemmas not only hinder the in-depth development of students' intercultural communicative competence, but also limit their ability to fully adapt and integrate in the context of globalization. Specifically, they are as follows:

(1) Insufficient understanding of the importance of intercultural awareness cultivation

In university English teaching, there has long existed a tendency to "emphasize the teaching of knowledge and skills and neglect the cultivation of cultural awareness". This tendency stems from a deep-rooted educational concept that mastering grammatical structures, expanding vocabulary, and improving listening and speaking skills are the core of English learning. However, as Li Ting (2019) points out, this teaching style, which focuses excessively on language skills, actually ignores the importance of cultural awareness development. Under this educational model, teachers tend to devote a lot of time and energy to grammar explanation, vocabulary memorization, and listening and speaking training, and pay less attention to the cultural connotations behind English and cross-cultural communication skills. They may wrongly believe that the cultivation of intercultural awareness has no substantial effect on the improvement of students' academic performance and does not help the improvement of students' practical application of English. However, this notion is one-sided. In today's increasingly globalized world, intercultural communication ability has become an indispensable part of modern talents. If English majors only master language skills but lack knowledge and understanding of different cultures, they are likely to encounter misunderstandings and conflicts in the process of cross-cultural communication because of their lack of sensitivity. This will not only affect their personal development, but also bring obstacles to international cooperation and communication.

(2) Teachers' weak intercultural awareness

In China, the study of intercultural awareness started late and developed relatively slowly compared with western countries. This lag is not only reflected in the depth and breadth of theoretical research, but also directly affects the cultivation of students' intercultural awareness in university English teaching. Due to the lack of scientific and systematic theoretical support, many teachers often seem to have a weak conception of the cultivation of intercultural awareness in their teaching practice. Prof. Xu Yue (2016) has pointed out that some teachers have errors in understanding and interpreting foreign cultures. These errors often stem from teachers' one-sided understanding of foreign cultures or lack of in-depth research, which in turn will be transmitted to students through the teaching process and affect their correct understanding of foreign cultures. Especially in some schools in remote areas, it is often difficult for teachers to fundamentally recognize the importance of intercultural awareness development due to the relative lack of teaching resources and their own limited teaching level and ability. In the process of teaching, if teachers do not play an active leading role, then the cultivation of students' intercultural awareness will be seriously affected. They may not be able to accurately understand the differences between different cultures or master cross-cultural communication skills, thus encountering misunderstandings and conflicts in future international interactions.

(3) Students' lack of in-depth understanding of foreign cultures

In their study, Wang Yuanyuan and Wu Yanping (2020) profoundly revealed the prevailing problems in current English learning. They pointed out that students nowadays generally lack the habit of reading English materials in depth, let alone analyzing English chapters in detail to understand the British and American expression habits, thinking patterns and cultural backgrounds. This lack of reading habits makes it difficult for students to reach the deeper cultural connotations of the language in English learning. Worse still, only a small number of students will show strong interest in international news, while most of them just skim and skim through it. This attitude leads to a serious lack of cross-cultural knowledge, making it difficult for students to communicate and interact effectively when facing people from different cultural backgrounds. The traditional way of teaching English tends to overemphasize grammatical structures and word memorization, while neglecting the teaching of cultural background. This teaching mode leads to students' lack of in-depth understanding of foreign cultures, which in turn leads to difficulties in real language communication. Due to the lack of cultural background

knowledge, it is difficult for students to accurately understand the cultural connotations in the language, not to mention that they are unable to freely use English for cross-cultural communication. In addition, when students learn English, they often focus only on the mastery of grammar and vocabulary, but neglect the cultural phenomena and sources behind the vocabulary. The limitations of this way of learning make students' understanding of English vocabulary only stay on the surface, making it difficult to grasp its deeper meaning and cultural connotation.

(4) Insufficient cross-cultural teaching content

The study by Luo Guiwen (2013) provides an in-depth analysis of the current challenges facing the field of intercultural education. They pointed out that a unified intercultural teaching syllabus and curriculum standards have not yet been formed, resulting in a lack of clear guidance on the selection of teaching materials and the use of teaching methods. At present, the teaching materials mainly rely on famous writings in the field of intercultural communication, from which teachers select suitable chapters for comprehensive lectures, combining lectures, discussions, case studies and comparisons between Chinese and Western cultures to impart knowledge. However, the limitations of this teaching method have gradually appeared. First of all, the teaching materials are updated slowly, which makes it difficult to keep up with the rapid changes and emerging trends in international communication, resulting in a certain disconnect between the teaching content and the actual needs. This may lead to difficulties for students to quickly adapt to the changing international environment after graduation. In addition, although some colleges and universities have already offered cross-cultural related courses, the integration of cross-cultural content is still insufficient in actual teaching. Many courses still focus on language knowledge and lack deeper analysis and comparison of cultures. This teaching mode may cause students to stay only on the surface of language learning, without being able to deeply understand the differences and commonalities between different cultures, thus affecting their future intercultural communicative competence.

4. Strategies for Cultivating Intercultural Awareness of English Majors

The cultivation of intercultural awareness is not only related to the overall development of individual students, but also to the competitiveness of the country in the international arena. Therefore, the cultivation of intercultural awareness is particularly important in the teaching of English majors. The following will discuss in detail the strategies of cultivating cross-cultural awareness among English majors, with a view to achieving the goals of improving students' cross-cultural communicative competence, broadening their international horizons and upgrading their comprehensive qualities.

(1) Clarify the cultivation objectives and make practical teaching programs

First of all, we must clearly realize that the cultivation of intercultural awareness is not an overnight process. Its goal is not only to make students respect and understand different cultures, but also to develop their communicative skills in multicultural exchanges. This means that students need to have an open mind, be able to tolerate and understand various cultural differences, and at the same time have enough communication skills to be able to express their thoughts and feelings comfortably among people of different cultural backgrounds. Once this goal is clearly defined, we need to begin to develop a specific teaching plan. This plan needs to take into full consideration the actual needs and learning characteristics of the students to ensure that the course content can comprehensively cover the cultural background, values, social etiquette, customs and habits and other aspects. In the selection of course content, we should emphasize its diversity and practicability, so that students can really feel the charm of different cultures in the process of learning, and gradually develop their knowledge and understanding of multiculturalism.

At the same time, we also need to make efforts in the design of teaching links. Through rich and diversified teaching activities, such as role-playing, group discussion, case study, etc., students can be allowed to practice their cross-cultural communication skills in practice. These activities can not only help students better understand the rules and skills of communication in different cultural contexts, but also improve their communication skills and teamwork abilities. In the process of teaching, we also need to focus on cultivating students' international perspective. By guiding students to pay attention to international news, read English literature, enjoy foreign movies and so on, we can make them understand more about the culture, history, politics and economy of different countries and regions. Such teaching not only helps to broaden students' horizons, but also develops their global awareness and cross-cultural thinking. It is an indispensable part of the teaching of English majors to clarify the objectives of cultivating intercultural awareness and to make practical teaching plans accordingly. Through such teaching, we can help students better adapt to the trend of globalization and lay a solid foundation for their future development.

(2) Improve the comprehensive quality of teachers

The comprehensive quality of teachers not only includes their academic level, but also covers their cultural literacy, international perspective and intercultural communication skills. To ensure the quality of teaching, schools should organize intercultural awareness training for teachers on a regular basis. Such training can be conducted in various forms, such as professional lectures, seminars and case studies, so that teachers can have a deep understanding and mastery of the theories and skills of intercultural communication. Through such training, teachers can continuously improve their cultural literacy and enhance their intercultural communication skills, so that they can better guide their students in the classroom and gradually develop respect and understanding for multiculturalism while learning English. In addition to internal training, schools should also actively bring in foreign teachers with cross-cultural communication experience. These foreign teachers not only have a strong academic background, but also have rich experience in international exchange. The addition of these teachers will not only bring a new international perspective to the school, but also provide students with more opportunities for real cross-cultural communication. In the interaction with foreign teachers, students can more intuitively feel the charm of different cultures, and more deeply understand the rules and skills of communication in different cultural backgrounds. Such a teaching mode will undoubtedly help students better understand different cultures and improve their intercultural communication skills in practice.

In addition, improving the comprehensive quality of teachers also needs the support of schools at the institutional level. Schools can set up incentive mechanisms to encourage teachers to actively participate in intercultural communication activities, such as attending international academic conferences and visiting foreign schools. At the same time, schools can also provide teachers with necessary resources and support, such as providing foreign language learning materials and subsidizing teachers to participate in international exchange programs. Such support can not only help teachers continuously improve their comprehensive quality, but also create a positive cultural atmosphere for the school. Improving the comprehensive quality of teachers is an indispensable part of teaching English majors. Through regular training, the introduction of foreign teachers and support at the institutional level, we can enable teachers to play a greater role in the cultivation of cross-cultural awareness, thus producing more English majors with an international outlook and cross-cultural communication skills.

(3) Strengthening intercultural practice

Simulating real-life scenarios is a highly effective way to improve students' intercultural communication skills within the classroom. Imagine a seminar on English literature designed by an English teacher, where students, dressed in the traditional costumes of various countries, are engaged in a discussion around a classic piece of foreign literature. They need to express

their opinions about the work in English, while respecting and understanding the views of their classmates from different cultural backgrounds. This kind of scenario simulation makes students feel as if they are in a real international academic discussion, where they have to focus not only on the language itself, but also on how to transmit and receive information from different cultures through the language. In addition to literature workshops, teachers can also simulate international conferences and cultural exchange events. In the international conference simulation, students can play the role of representatives of various countries, give speeches and debate on an international topic. Such activities not only exercise their English speaking and listening skills, but also enable them to learn and master communication skills and etiquette in cross-cultural exchange in practice. As for the cultural exchange activities, students can demonstrate and share their own country's culture through performances, exhibitions and games, and at the same time learn and appreciate other countries' cultures.

In addition to simulations in the classroom, international exchange programs are a great way for students to experience different cultures first-hand. Imagine students having the opportunity to go abroad and study, intern or volunteer in a foreign country. There, they will be immersed in a new cultural environment, studying, working and living with people from different cultures. Such experiences not only allow them to gain a deeper understanding of the history, politics and economy of different cultures, but also allow them to practice and improve their cross-cultural communication skills. International exchange programs give students the opportunity to experience first-hand the collision and fusion between different cultures. They may encounter confusion and challenges brought about by cultural differences, but they will also learn to respect and understand different cultures in the process, and learn to accept and appreciate the charm of multiculturalism with an open mind. Such an experience will benefit them for life, not only helping them to be more comfortable and confident in future international exchanges, but also enabling them to become a new-age talent with a global vision and intercultural communication skills. Strengthening cross-cultural practice is an indispensable part of teaching English majors. By simulating real-life scenarios and international exchange programs, we can provide a broad stage for students to learn and improve their intercultural communication skills in practice and lay a solid foundation for their future development.

(4) Updating cross-cultural teaching content in textbooks

In order to ensure the systematic and standardized nature of intercultural content in teaching materials, education departments should speed up the formulation of intercultural teaching syllabuses and curriculum standards. These syllabi and standards should clarify the objectives, contents and requirements of intercultural teaching and provide clear guidance for the writers of teaching materials. At the same time, the formulation of syllabi and standards should take full account of the current new trends and problems of international exchange and ensure that the teaching content is current and practical. When updating the content of teaching materials, the writers of teaching materials should actively draw on the latest cases and practical experiences in current international exchanges to ensure that the content of teaching materials is advanced and cutting-edge. For example, current international hot topics and events can be introduced, so that students can deepen their understanding and awareness of different cultures in the analysis and discussion. In addition, textbook writers should also pay attention to the commonalities and differences between different cultures, and help students better grasp the essence and characteristics of different cultures through comparison and analysis.

When choosing cross-cultural contents, textbooks should ensure that the contents are representative, inspiring and practical. These contents can come from different fields, such as literary works, movies, music, art, etc., aiming at enabling students to understand and perceive different cultures from multiple perspectives. For example, representative foreign masterpieces can be selected for literature, so that students can appreciate the charm and

connotation of different cultures; movies and music can let students visualize the artistic styles and emotional expressions of different cultures; and art can let students appreciate the unique aesthetics and creativity of different cultures. In addition, when presenting cross-cultural content, the teaching materials should also emphasize inspirational and practicality. Through case studies, role plays, group discussions and other activities, students can learn and master the skills and methods of cross-cultural communication in practice. At the same time, the textbook can also provide some practical intercultural communication strategies and suggestions to help students become more comfortable and confident in actual communication. Updating the intercultural teaching content in textbooks is an indispensable part of teaching English majors. By formulating cross-cultural teaching syllabus and course standards, drawing on the latest cases and practical experiences of international communication, and selecting representative, inspiring and practical cross-cultural content, we can provide students with richer, more comprehensive and practical cross-cultural learning resources. This will help improve students' intercultural communication skills and lay a solid foundation for their future international communication.

5. Summary

In the context of globalization, cross-cultural communication is like a rushing river that drives the world forward. In this increasingly connected global village, English, as the universal language of international communication, carries the important task of communicating with the world. Therefore, the cultivation of cross-cultural awareness of English majors is especially crucial, which is not only the cornerstone of students' personal growth and development, but also an important support for the country's foreign communication and international competitiveness. Facing this important and urgent task, we need to comprehensively strengthen the intercultural education of English majors from multiple levels and dimensions. We need to deepen students' knowledge and understanding of different cultures. Through systematic curriculum and rich and diversified teaching activities, students can be exposed to the cultures of different countries and nationalities, and understand their history, traditions and values. Such education not only helps students broaden their horizons, but also makes them realize the diversity and differences of cultures, so that they can learn respect and tolerance. It is important to cultivate students' intercultural communication skills. Intercultural communication is not only language communication, but also communication of the mind. Therefore, we need to let students practice and improve their intercultural communication skills in practice through simulation practice and international exchange programs. For example, we can organize students to participate in international academic conferences, cultural exchange activities, etc., so that they can have face-to-face communication with people from different cultural backgrounds and experience the charm of cross-cultural communication. In addition, we also need to pay attention to cultivating students' critical thinking ability and innovation ability. In intercultural communication, students need to have the ability to think and judge independently, to be able to objectively analyze the differences and commonalities between different cultures, and to put forward their own opinions and insights on this basis. At the same time, they also need to have the ability to innovate, to be able to apply what they have learned to solve practical problems, and to promote the in-depth development of intercultural communication. In order to realize these goals, we need to build a perfect cross-cultural education curriculum system. This curriculum system should include cultural cognition, cross-cultural communication, discernment and innovation, etc. It should focus on the teaching of theoretical knowledge as well as the cultivation of practical ability. At the same time, we also need to strengthen the construction of the faculty, improve the teachers' intercultural education awareness and ability, and provide better educational services for students. In

conclusion, the cultivation of intercultural awareness of English majors is a long-term and arduous task. We need to strengthen intercultural education systematically and comprehensively from multiple dimensions, and create more real and rich intercultural communication practice opportunities for students. Only in this way can we cultivate more outstanding talents who are capable of competing in the international arena and promoting the development and prosperity of the country, so that Chinese culture can blossom more brilliantly in the tide of globalization.

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