A Study on Using AI-Simulated Intercultural Dialogues to Develop Students' Cultural Communication Ability in College English Class

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Abstract

Education is becoming digital quickly, and college English class should not only teach language knowledge anymore. Cross cultural communication and the ability to spread Chinese culture in English have become increasingly important. Traditional teaching has some problems: fixed scenes, not enough interaction, too much input but too little output, and no personalized guidance. Generative AI can simulate scenes, talk with students, adjust to their ability, and give proper feedback, so it offers a new way to reform intercultural teaching. Based on real college English classes, this paper looks at the problems of traditional teaching, explains the value of AI-simulated intercultural dialogues, and builds a teaching model of "pre-class preparation – in-class practice – after-class extension – multiple assessment". It also discusses how to develop students' cultural communication ability in class, talks about the risks of using the technology, and gives some suggestions. The study shows that using AI-simulated dialogues properly can improve students' intercultural thinking and cultural output ability, and help them tell Chinese stories in English.

Keywords

AI-simulated dialogue; college English; cultural communication; digital empowerment.

1. Introduction

College English in the new era focuses on developing intercultural communication, critical thinking and cultural communication together. The goal is to train talents who can take part in international exchange and spread Chinese culture. As AI enters education, the way of foreign language teaching is changing. The old lecture-style teaching can no longer meet the needs of talent training[1]. How to use smart technology to improve intercultural teaching, and how to solve the problem that students are weak in expressing Chinese culture in English, has become an important topic for college English reform.

At present, intercultural teaching in many universities still has clear weaknesses. Classes focus on inputting Western culture. Practice scenes are limited, and students lack regular practice in intercultural oral communication and cultural explanation[2]. Long-term one-way input leaves students with weak intercultural pragmatic ability and one-sided cultural knowledge. It is hard for them to introduce Chinese culture in idiomatic English. Besides, most college English classes are large, so differentiated teaching is hard to carry out. The needs of students with different levels are not well met, which hurts the effect of intercultural education.

Large language models can simulate different communication situations of different countries. They can also create a low-pressure and immersive environment for intercultural dialogue practice, which can make up for the limits of traditional classes[3]. Based on college English class, this paper discusses how to use AI-simulated intercultural dialogues, looks at the

advantages and risks of the technology in a balanced way, and hopes to provide some reference for digital English teaching and cultural education in universities.

2. Problems in Traditional Intercultural Teaching of College English

2.1. Single Teaching Scenes with Less Real Communication Situations

Intercultural communication is a practical ability. Students need real communication scenes to gain pragmatic experience. Traditional teaching relies on static resources like textbooks, courseware and short videos. The content often stays at surface-level cultural symbols such as festivals, food and etiquette, and lacks high-frequency real scenes like academic discussions, cultural debates and international interviews[4]. Students passively memorize pieces of cultural knowledge. It is hard for them to feel the thinking differences behind different cultures, so they often make pragmatic mistakes and cultural misunderstandings in real communication.

2.2. Limited Classroom Interaction makes Students Difficult to Take Cultural Communication

Current classroom interaction is mostly teacher-student Q&A, group discussion and fixed role-play. It hardly leads to real intercultural thinking collisions[5]. Teachers and students are both in the local cultural context. They cannot copy the thinking and positions of foreign speakers, so classroom practice is still language drilling within the same culture. Class time is limited and not everyone can take part. Students often “understand but cannot speak”, and their practical ability to spread Chinese culture is quite weak.

2.3. Uniform Teaching Leading to Uniform Result

In large classes, students differ a lot in vocabulary, speaking and cultural knowledge, but the tasks, content and assessment standards are almost the same. Weak students find it hard to finish high-level intercultural tasks, while advanced students get no room to improve. Teachers also cannot take care of every student's expression errors and cognitive biases. One-on-one guidance is missing, so students' intercultural ability develops unevenly.

2.4. Unbalanced Culture Teaching and Lack of Local Culture Training

Intercultural teaching in college English has long been “heavy on the West, light on the local”. It focuses on British and American society and values, but pays little attention to the English expression and international communication of fine traditional Chinese culture and China's development achievements[6]. Many students know Western cultural facts well, but cannot explain the meaning of Chinese intangible cultural heritage and traditional festivals to outsiders. They lack cultural confidence in communication and cannot achieve equal two-way cultural dialogue.

3. Main Advantages of AI-Simulated Intercultural Dialogues in English Teaching

3.1. Immersive Scene Simulation

Generative AI can simulate different people's language style and logic . It can also restore scenes like daily communication, academic interviews and cultural exchanges, therefore it can break the limits of traditional classrooms. Unlike static materials, AI supports multi-turn dynamic dialogues. It adjusts content as students speak, which can bring back the uncertainty of real intercultural communication[7]. Talking with AI is low-pressure. It can ease students' anxiety about speaking and encourage them to try boldly and make mistakes, so they slowly build intercultural sensitivity through interaction.

3.2. Self-Adaptive Training at Different Levels

AI can evaluate students' language level, sentence patterns and dialogue logic, and adjust task according to their ability to realize personalized training. Weak students are required to do basic communication exercises, while advanced students do complex exercises like cultural debates and themed presentations. AI can also correct errors instantly and give better expressions, in this way, it can make up for the lack of personalized guidance in big classes.

3.3. Promote the Mode of Two-Way Cultural Interaction

As a foreign dialogue partner, AI can actively raise questions comparing Chinese and Western culture, and even throw out one-sided cultural views. This pushes students to sort out the meaning of Chinese culture, organize English expressions, and respond to cultural differences, changing the one-way input in class. Through repeated practice, students learn to explain Chinese culture in English, fix literal translation from Chinese, get familiar with the translation of cultural terms, and gradually build a communication way that fits the international context.

3.4. Recording the Whole Process of Students' Learning to Get Feedback

Traditional intercultural teaching only focuses on final exams but it ignores students' learning process. AI can fully record information such as participation, fluency, accuracy and cultural awareness, and generate personalized learning reports[7]. Based on these reports, teachers can see the weaknesses of the whole class and each student, and adjust teaching focuses in time. Assessment then promotes teaching, and a whole-process feedback loop is formed.

4. The way to Use AI-Simulated Intercultural Dialogues in Class Teaching

4.1. Pre-view for Students of Different Levels before Class

Teachers design tiered pre-class tasks based on unit goals. For Western culture topics, use AI to generate cultural comparison materials and taboos, and guide students to have simple dialogues with AI. For Chinese culture topics, guide students to use AI to sort out the English expressions of traditional festivals, intangible cultural heritage and etiquette, and fix literal translation. Short dialogue homework is also given, asking students to write down their expression difficulties and come to class with questions, so the gap between students can be narrowed.

4.2. Practice of different levels in Class

Classroom practice has three levels from easy to hard. The first is basic communication practice: AI plays foreign teachers, students or tourists and talks with students one on one, correcting grammar, pauses and pragmatic mistakes, so as to build a solid language foundation. The second is cultural thinking practice: set up AI roles with fixed Western bias, and guide students to compare Chinese and Western cultures and explain the inner meaning of Chinese culture. For example, in a festival unit, students explain in English the ideas of family reunion in the Spring Festival and patriotism in the Dragon Boat Festival, which trains their thinking and explanation ability. The third is advanced cultural communication practice: create scenes like speeches overseas and interviews with international youth. Students act as cultural communicators, introducing fine Chinese culture and China's development today, and answering questions from AI-simulated overseas audiences, so as to improve their logic. Teachers should guide the value direction of the class and achieve human-machine collaborative education.

4.3. After-Class Extension According to Students' own Presentation

According to Students' own Presentation given by AI learning reports, teachers assign different after-class tasks. For example, weak students practice basic dialogues, and advanced students

do cultural thinking and communication training. Teachers should encourage students to create their own scenes of dialogue, and compare their own expressions with the excellent versions provided by AI to reflect on their weaknesses. They can also use AI to polish speeches and exchange documents, and gain intercultural communication experience.

4.4. Multiple Assessment and Review

Build a three-dimensional assessment system of "AI quantitative assessment + teacher qualitative assessment + student self-reflection". AI gives quantitative reports such as participation and language accuracy. Teachers give qualitative assessment based on class performance, thinking level and cultural position, focusing on cultural confidence and communication quality. Students review their dialogue records, find weaknesses and make improvement plans. In this way, the old model of judging only by exam results is changed, and a complete education loop is formed.

5. Existing Problems and Suggestions

While AI serves teaching, it also has some risks. First, model training data has a Western discourse bias. When explain certain cultural phenomena, it may make students misled and do not have clear Chinese cultural position [3]. AI also cannot fully understand the complex emotions of human beings, and some answers do not carry deep cultural meaning. Second, some teachers only use AI as a simple error-correction and polishing tool, without systematic training design, staying at a shallow level of use[4]. Third, some students directly copy the content provided by AI do not think independently, so the training goal cannot be reached[5].

There are four suggestions. First, keep the teacher's leading role: check AI dialogue materials in advance, hold cultural review discussions after class, guide students to view Chinese and Western cultural differences dialectically, and strengthen cultural confidence and identity[6]. Second, design tiered training tasks around the goals of course ideology and core competencies, so that AI teaching does not become a mere formality. Third, make clear that AI is only an aid, and set a learning process of "express independently first, then AI optimization, then review and summary". Class spot checks and peer review can push students to think independently. Fourth, schools should train teachers' digital literacy and improve their ability to design smart teaching, so as to meet the needs of teaching reform[1].

6. Conclusion

AI-simulated intercultural dialogues can ease the problems of traditional intercultural teaching in college English, such as limited scenes, weak interaction, poor cultural output and lack of personalized guidance. They give students regular immersive practice and improve their language use, intercultural thinking and ability to spread Chinese culture. In the digital era, college English teaching should keep to "teacher-led, AI-empowered, student-centered, culture-focused", and deeply combine smart technology with intercultural teaching and course ideology. Teachers should treat AI as an aid in a rational way, avoid problems such as model bias and tool-like use, and rely on scientific design, standard procedures and multiple assessment to unite language teaching, intercultural quality and cultural communication education, so as to guide students to take part in international exchange with confidence and tell the Chinese stories of the new era.

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